

COBALT-SERIES

谷
瑞惠

伯爵と妖精

駆け落ちは月夜を待って

集英社

A black and white manga-style illustration featuring three characters. In the upper right, a girl with long, wavy hair and a gentle smile is shown. In the lower left, a young man with short, dark hair and a serious expression is depicted. Behind him, a cat-like character with a mask is visible. The background consists of stylized foliage and flowers.

NICO

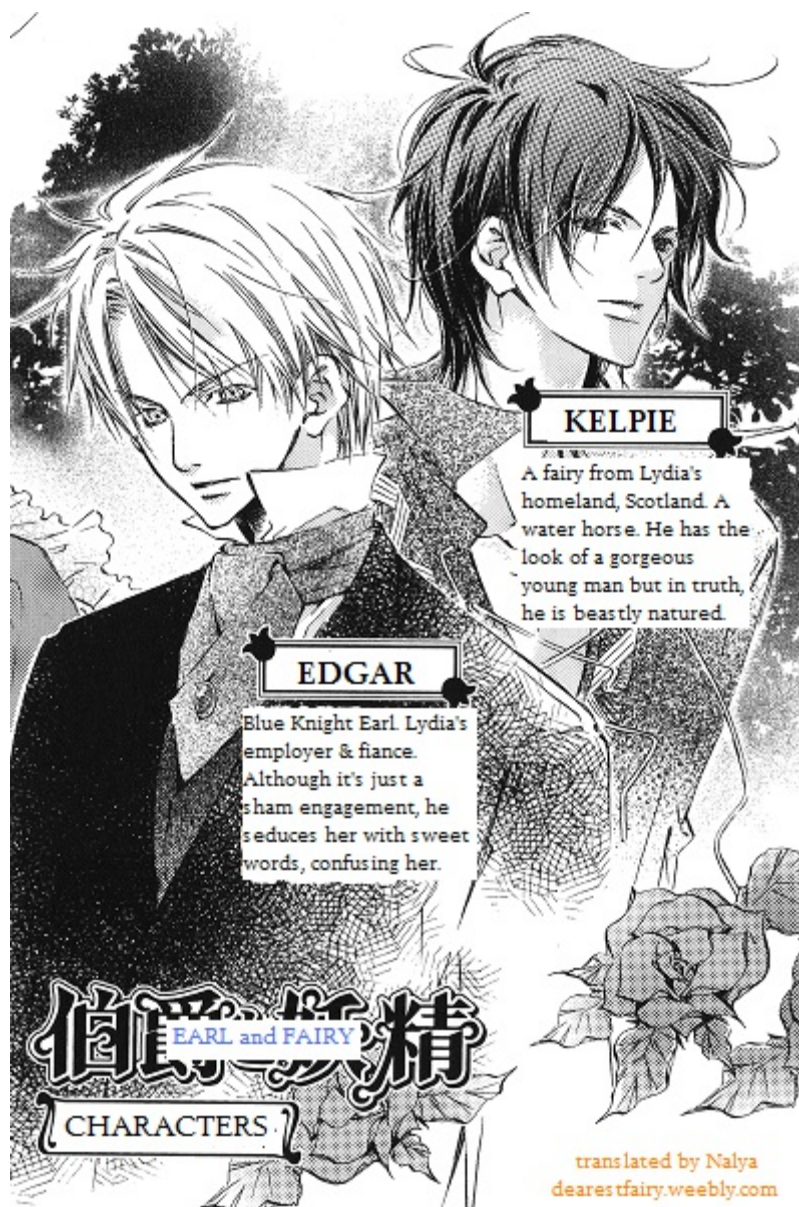
A fairy in cat form. Lydia's childhood friend and partner. A shameless fellow that thinks himself as a gentleman and so very particular about his meals and appearance.

LYDIA

A girl who can see and speak to fairies. She's hired as Edgar's fairy doctor. She is baffled by Edgar's seductive words but her heart could be swaying?

RAVEN

Edgar's butler, a man with an aura of mystery. An excellent martial artist who is completely loyal to his master.



KELPIE

A fairy from Lydia's homeland, Scotland. A water horse. He has the look of a gorgeous young man but in truth, he is beastly natured.

EDGAR

Blue Knight Earl. Lydia's employer & fiancé. Although it's just a sham engagement, he seduces her with sweet words, confusing her.

伯爵と妖精
EARL and FAIRY

CHARACTERS

translated by Nalya
dearestfairy.weebly.com

Short Story: A Fairytale on a Silver Moon Night

[Forewarning to all about Fairies. If you spot a fairy ring, DO NOT step inside it]

Those were the words printed on the large sign, and Lydia patted it down after she stuck it on a hedge along a small road a little ways from town.

"Well, that should do it," Lydia said to herself.

People chuckled as they passed behind her.

The Carlton oddball daughter finally lost her mind.

She could hear their whisper but disregarded what they said and made a second inspection of her sign.

[For any directions regarding fairies, please contact Lydia Carlton, at House Number 5 on Mommi's Tree Alley.]

"Chin up! If any fairies cause trouble, I am the only one who can solve it in this town," Lydia motivated herself.

She came up with this idea, to seriously pursue this job, only about a month ago. Up to that point, most of the towns people haven't realized that the misfortunes or accidents were fairy pranks, and when Lydia pointed them out, they only snorted at her.

"And when you solved them, your oddball name will spread even more," said the voice that came from above in the tree branches.

The one that was sitting on the branch was a long-haired gray cat. It jumped down to the ground and stood up on its hind legs. It even wore a fancy tie around its neck.

"Lydia, your mother was indeed a fairy doctor, but that was a long time ago, it's a different story now. I can understand if it was a remote area where humans shared their lives with fairies but not in a rising town like this," he said.

The cat who spoke freely and could disappear at will, was not really a cat, but a

fairy. He supposedly has lived longer than Lydia but he grew up with her as a childhood friend. And as he said, it was the middle of the 19th century, where railroads spread across all of England, and factories were sprouting up everywhere and people's lives improved dramatically with the advancement in industrialization. At the same time, it was the era when fairies were thought of as characters in bedtime stories and their existence has slowly become forgotten.

"But even in this town, there are plenty of fairies. And they cause plenty of trouble. So, don't get in my way, Nico," said Lydia.

So I have to post these signs all over town. Besides, the summer solstice is near. The fairies' pranks are sure to increase.

Just like how her mother was when she was still alive, in order for Lydia to be acknowledged as a fairy doctor, it was necessary to advertise at this time of year. She was only just a sixteen-year-old girl, but Lydia thought of herself as the most knowledgeable about fairies in this region. She was able to see fairies since birth, and naturally became experienced with them.

Consequently, she now had more fairy acquaintances than human. So she thought that her ability was most useful only in a job like this. Just then, she heard the sound of shredding paper coming from behind her. She turned around to see that there was a group of children ripping off her posters.

"What are you doing? Stop that!," she shouted.

"Aah! Lydia got angry! She's going to curse us! Hair will grow out of our bellybuttons!"

The children dashed off. As they were running, they continued to shout about cursed hair growing from strange places.

"I will have the fairies pinch naughty children like you!"

Of course, saying such things would only lead to the prankster's parents becoming even more apprehensive about her.

"Could you really make hair grow?" came a male voice.

"Yes, do you want me to make you into a fur ball as well?!" she snapped, thinking it was another mischief-making youngster, and whipped around to face him, but the one standing there bewildered, was a unfamiliar young man.

Surely not a residence of the town, he wore a black frock coat, and carried a leather suitcase in one hand and an instrument case in his other. By his worn out hat and English, she could tell he was a respectable gentleman from the middleclass. He bent down to pick up one of the shredded pieces of poster.

“Would this Lydia Carlton be you?” asked the young man.

“...Yes. Would you please move aside? I want to fix my posters.”

I can't get discouraged from behavior like this.

Thinking ahead, she brought along extra sheets just in case of these kinds of situations.

“What does this ‘Forewarning of fairies’ mean?” questioned the man.

“Exactly as it says. If you hear the voice of a fairy, you have to ignore it. Or else you're going to regret you opened your mouth.”

“Are you saying that there really are fairies?” he asked.

“Uh, may I make certain of something. Are you asking me this to make a mockery out of me?”

“Oh, no. I just thought what a mysterious poster this is.”

It seems like he has no other intentions.

“Fine, then.” Lydia pulled herself together and spread a poster on the ground and started to paste glue on it with a brush.

“You're from England aren't you? Here in Scotland, there are fairies all over the place. Just as common as the rats in London. But, most people don't have the ability to notice them, hence, posters like these are incomprehensible to them.”

“Oh, I see.”

“You don't have to force yourself to believe in me.”

Even to people who take the time to honestly listen, I can only be stubbornly unreasonable. To be like mother who had such an open heart and serviced everyone, I will need to train myself even more to be sufficient, she thought.

Unable to paste the poster up straight, Lydia was struggling to align it and since it was quiet behind her she thought the young man had already left.

But, after pasting it up right and taking a breath as she stepped back, there was another voice that asked “Are you finished?”

“Wh-What are you doing?” she said after turning around and finding him still

there.

“Hmm? I was waiting for you of course,” he replied with a genuinely expression.

“...and what purpose is keeping you here?”

“Do you know of Mr. Ballet’s residence?”

“Anyone knows it. You can ask someone on the main street.” And when Lydia started to walk off, the young man followed her.

“You are not going to guide me there?”

“Better not. If you are seen walking with me on the main streets, rumors will fly around that you are some sort of eccentric.”

“I don’t mind. Because I will be in this town for only three days,” he said.

He doesn’t seem the charitable type.

People who approach Lydia usually saw her as an unfortunate girl and sympathized with her by trying to be overly kind and they were the ones to say “You’ve done nothing wrong, you are not different.”

But with this man, it seemed like he didn’t mind that she was an oddball or not. What an strange person, she thought.

“.....Fine. I’ll be passing by it anyway.”

“Great,” he said with a carefree smile.

The young man introduced himself as Ian Reynolds. He was a violinist that was passing through this town on his way to Edinburgh. His carriage had gotten stuck in a ditch on the outskirts of town and since it was not far, he claimed he had come here by foot. Invited by the gentry Mr. Ballet, he also said that he was going to have a concert tomorrow night.

“Are you famous?” Lydia asked the insolent question, which he laughingly answered.

“I’m still an amateur. I know! why don’t you come and listen? You could invite someone else as well,” he said.

“Are you being sarcastic?” she retorted thoughtlessly.

But she was beginning to understand that his motives were not so.

“No, um, I’m sorry. This personality of mine must be a defensive mechanism. In other words, ...you can tell, right? There isn’t anyone who would want to socialize with me,” unexpectedly, Lydia grumbling about herself in a low tone. It

must have been because he carried himself with such seriousness around her.

“Why? You see fairies is all, right?” he asked, puzzled.

“But, isn’t a girl who can speak to fairies unnerving? Besides, people say that I’m a fairy changeling.”

“A changeling? Is there some kind of proof?” he asked.

“My mother, she passed away, was a renowned beauty. Her blonde hair was a perfect gold, and her skin was white as snow. But I don’t resemble her one bit. My hair is this reddish-brown, and I don’t have any charming features.”

“You may think so. But you have very beautiful eyes. It’s green with shades of gold,” he said. Unexpectedly he bent down to look into her eyes, which gave her a little jolt.

“You don’t have to force yourself,” she repeated.

“I haven’t intended to,” he replied.

Lydia became confused as to how to deal with her feelings of contrition.

“Alright, ...I understand. Anyhow, what I want to imply is that you do not have to compliment me.”

I can not hassle him any longer, Lydia thought and stopped walking.

“The building with the red roof there is the house of Mr. Ballet,” she pointed.

After he nodded, Ian stuck his hand into one of the inner pockets of his coat and took out a piece of paper. “This is a ticket for the concert. I would be honored if you’d come and listen.”

Lydia hesitated. He should already figured out that she was a warped woman but yet he still invites her.

“Is there that much difficulty in attracting customers?” she asked.

To which he burst out laughing.

“I guess so. Even if just one person attended, we can still run the concert. So please attend. And I’ll be careful to not compliment you.”

As he walked off waving, she saw him off while muttering, “He such a strange man.”

“My goodness, he is famous,” murmured Lydia.

She had arrived back home and spotted Ian’s name on the paper set on the table. It talked about the famous violinist from London opening the ‘Concert on

the Moonlit Night’.

“Then there’s no worry about just one person attending.”

So there would be no need for me to go and listen. While thinking that, Lydia pulled out the dresses from her closet, spread them across her bed, and repeatedly looked them over herself in the mirror.

“Lydia. Forget that and let’s go out and have some fun. I heard the meadow fairies are holding a ball,” Nico protested.

“Not a chance. That clan is too fastidious. More importantly Nico, which do you think is better, the blue or the pink?” asked Lydia.

“Has the Englishman caught your fancy?” asked the cat.

“Don’t be ridiculous.”

“But, you’re in such high spirits,” he pointed out.

“I am not spirited...” she murmured.

Come to think about it, there was probably just an extra ticket. It could have been meant as a gift of thanks for the guide.

And yet Lydia realized she was acting as if she was excited to go meet Ian. Seeing herself acting ridiculously, she threw the dress aside.

In the mirror, there was a reflection of her sullen face. Her yellowish-green eyes looked back at her. This trait did not look like her either one of her parents. She was aware that people said it was the fairy blood, or she looks like a witch, but her father and mother both said they were beautiful.

Her only remaining family, her father, was living and working in London and scarcely came back home to her in Scotland. Her father could not see fairies, but he accepted her mother and supported her throughout her life. Both of them were called oddballs, but to Lydia, they were the ideal husband and wife and she grew up wishing that she could meet someone like her father someday. But in her sixteen-years of life, she has never come across such a person. Bachelors her age hardly ever talked to her. So that resulted in her not getting to know anyone, and thus not falling in love.

To plainly put it, her mother was just lucky. And lately she thought that she wasn’t going to as fortunate.

Besides her parents, Ian was the first one to compliment her, so her heart must

have become confused.

As the sunset went by and the silver moon floated mistily in the sky, Lydia looked out the window hearing the fairies' voices as they rustled above the dark garden.

A small bunch of glowing lights burst out of an elder bush and lined up in a row flying across the garden. They must be heading off to the ball the rose meadow fairy clan was hosting.

The elder tree emitted a strong aroma like insects and carried an ill-omened association with it and was known as the 'Witch's Tree.' But regardless of the stories surrounding it, it was a tree with mysterious powers that attracted the fae.

That's why her father planted so many. And thanks to that, now the garden was a fabulous meeting place for fairies.

(Has everyone heard? The rose meadow fairy queen announced she has gotten something wonderful.)

(Yes, it seems to be a violinist. She says it's a young human. I heard it's a young soul that shines like a brilliant jewel.)

Lydia overheard their conversation, and jumped up from her bed to slam open the window and stuck out her head.

"What you just said, is that true!?"

(Aah, it's the meany Lydia!) cried the brown little fairies as they scattered about.

I am not mean, Lydia thought to herself angrily. These brownies just loved to play pranks, and she just cautioned the people because they liked to hide human children and sour the wine.

If the fairies get too out of hand, it would only make it harder for their cohabitation with humans.

A fairy doctor's job was not only to help people who were the victims of the fairies' pranks. She was told by her mother that a fairy doctor needed to educate the people to help make them understand fairies and their roles were to be the bridge between them so that both sides could live in peace.

In this era, when rail roads spread all over the country, their job may be a dying

breed but even if people couldn't see fairies or even if they were forgotten, fairies still existed. So, Lydia's gift should have some importance.

Unlike the past, her job title would be seen as ridiculous to some people, but she was proud of her ability that was passed down from her mother. All the more that she did not want to be embarrassed about her ability or try to hide it, and wished to make it useful.

"Nico, you heard them didn't you?" she looked back into the room.

The talking cat was lying across the mantle piece. Resting his head on his arm, Nico crossed his hind legs and yawned widely. He looked like a little tired man inside a cat suit when he posed like that.

"Hmph. That crowd loves beautiful things. So a human soul that can create something beautiful is perfect."

"We're going to that ball."

"Now, now, you don't know for certain if it's that violinist."

"Is there any other violinist in this town that the fairy queen would want? The performers in the pubs all sound like screaming women anyway."

"Even so, would the rose meadow fairy queen give back a treasure that's hers?"

"I need you to take me to the rose meadow fairies."

Nico stood up as if he surrendered and said "the round stones on top of the windy hill" and cocked his head to the side as if gesturing her to follow.



The moonlight painted the hill a silvery white; Lydia exited the town streets and followed behind the cat that was trotting along on his hind legs up the grassy dirt path.

In the distance, Lydia was able to see a fuzzy bundle of lights swarming together. It was the flock of fairies. In the middle of it, there was a human figure lying down on the ground.

Passing by Nico, Lydia ran toward it. She jumped into the light swarm, swinging around an ash branch in one hand, making the fairies scattered away like flies off a fruit. In the field lighted only by the moon, Ian was left lying asleep holding onto his violin.

"Mister, wake up! Are you alright?" To Lydia's voice, he slowly opened his eyes.

He smiled angelically as if unaware that he was in unnatural, dangerous situation.

“Oh, it’s you. ...I was dreaming the most curious dream. Yes, it was like I was surrounded by fairies...”

“It wasn’t a dream.”

“Huh? ...Now that you mention it, where are we? It was a beautiful moonlit night and I was taking a walk...”

“You stepped in a fairy ring, didn’t you?”

“Ah yes, there was a mark of a circular light on the ground. I didn’t know what it was and so I was curious. ..So that was a fair ring. It’s the first time I ever saw one.”

It seemed Lydia’s warning on her flyers had no effect.

“So that means I was captured by fairies?” he questioned.

“That’s right.”

“And so you came to rescue me.”

“Luckily, I came just in time before they took you to the fairy world... Oh, but have you had anything taken?”

“No, nothing. I have my violin and my two hands. If something else was taken, it doesn’t matter. I know! Let me play you a song as my thanks.”

He must be a placid person for acting like this when he had just been so close to never coming back to this human world.

But most likely, even if he was taken to the fairy world, he would be able to be happy as long as he could play his violin.

Smiling as he stood up, Ian was beautiful as he prepared his instrument. Standing up straight in the grassy meadow, he bathed in the moonlight. The light showered his tall enhancing figure as he set his bow on the strings.

The music that came out was like a dream.

It’s ‘Moonlit Night,” thought Lydia.

It was the first time for her to hear it but this song which was the main song for the concert was easy to guess from it’s brilliant tune that melted into the moon night. Lydia listened, closing her eyes, sitting on the grass thinking how the music sparkled like silver to her ears.

The music abruptly ended. He had stopped the bow, tilting his head in confusion, looking at his instrument.

“What’s the matter?” asked Lydia.

“This isn’t it... Not like this, I can’t get the usual sound.”

“What, really? I thought it was marvelous as it was.”

“But something’s missing. What that is, I don’t know quite myself.”

“Th-That’s it!” shouted Lydia, standing up.

“What is?”

“The point is, you had something taken.”

“Then I won’t be able to play the violin anymore?” he muttered in despair.

The sight of his sorrow in his slumped shoulders was begging pity. She had come to help him, but if he couldn’t play, she still hadn’t saved him.

The concert was an event that all the townspeople were anxious about.

Not only that, but even in Edinburgh, or London, there will be disappointed people if they found out Ian couldn’t play anymore.

“...It will be alright, Mister Reynolds. I’ll get it back from the fairies.”

“Can you really do such a thing?”

To get it back meant Lydia needed to make an exchange with the fairy queen of the rose meadow. It was a great millstone for someone inexperienced like Lydia. Even if she read about how to negotiate with fairies, she was still far from being a true fairy doctor. The fairy doctors in history were well respected by the fairy clans, that’s why they could trade successfully with them.

But it was only a second that Lydia hesitated. If she couldn’t help someone in trouble, then Lydia was just an oddball that saw storybook creatures. She wouldn’t be honoring her mother’s profession.

“I’ll try my best,” said Lydia.

“But Lydia, why are you so kind? For a traveler like myself, whose just passing through.”

When she was stared at so straightly by Ian, it made Lydia’s heart beat faster.

That’s because...,

Was it because he complimented her golden green eyes? Or because Ian wasn’t freaked out by Lydia?

“I want to do the same job as my mother. You will be my first client.”

If she was questioned further, she felt as if her mouth might slip something embarrassing. Lydia didn't want to allow any no more questions and so she headed off. She ran in the direction the dispersed fairies were heading towards. The rose meadow fairy clan must be enjoying their ball that was held at the round stones just ahead.

The area around the round stones at night was deserted and there even was no sound of the wind. But once she stepped into the center, Lydia stepped into a different realm and was surrounded by floating curtains of lights. It was the fairies' ball.

All around her, there were flowers in full bloom. There were flowers from different seasons that covered the hill. Fairies dressed in flower petals were singing and dancing with an elderberry flower, the size of a pea, in their hands. Lydia realized that she was the same tiny height as the fairies, and had stumbled in amongst their crowd.

Let's dance. Let's dance. The fairies invited her. Intoxicated by the light and strong smell, she was forgetting the reason why she had come here.

“Don't do it, Lydia,” said the capricious cat standing on his hind legs; he had disappeared when they were with Ian but he had showed up in front of Lydia suddenly. In fact, at a monstrously tall height. More like his size hadn't changed at all. He was more a monster than a cat.

“You have never negotiated with fairies before. Even if you knew charms to stop pranks, it's hopeless to try to trade with a queen so suddenly.”

Nico's voice brought back Lydia from the dance invitation and made her focus again.

“I have to try, or I'll never become a fairy doctor,” she said. Lydia wended through the mixing flying fairies trying to find the queen's throne. She found the queen wearing scarlet petals sitting on a velvety shining mossy stone throne. Her hair and skin were white enough to show through and had a thin pair of wings that looked like glass.

“Your majesty, I have come to ask a request,” presented Lydia, kneeling down in front of the queen.

(Daughter of the Earth, I know your wish is about the violinist. But I have no intention of releasing him. It is a rare soul I found that creates such marvelous music.)

“Your majesty, I do not dare ask for it’s return freely.”

An exchange of one thing for another; a fairy could not refuse that sort of offer. Even if they came in possession of something, their appetite is never satisfied and they constantly seek something new. It was more instinct than characteristic for them. Of course, it had to be something of more value than the previous one or it was meaningless.

Lydia ran over her brain to come up with an idea of what to exchange. If it was her mother in this same situation, she would craft an idea that had no harm on herself but looked tempting to the fairies and so she would have skillfully maneuvered out of this dilemma. But Lydia didn’t have the same experience or knowledge.

(Don’t do it, Lydia. The reason I haven’t returned him is also for your benefit,) spoke the queen just when Lydia was still in deep thought.

“Why is that, your majesty?”

The queen softly lifted her arm to give the sign to one of her fairy maids who floated down carrying something in her hands. It was a large envelope, still a size too big for their proportion. But if Lydia were to change back to her regular size, it was just a plain good sized envelope.

(This was dropped by the violinist.)

“That is part of his soul that creates the beautiful music?”

(Indeed. The heart of loving another. The source that creates marvelous art and shines the soul. The violinist always carried this letter from his lover wherever he went and thought of that person from afar. Humans are so mysterious and carry such beauty within. As we fairies do not share this, it makes them so interesting.)

A letter from a lover? Lydia’s heart started to beat rapidly.

Ian had forgotten such an important thing as that. And, the fact that he had a lover. He had forgotten how much he thought of that person, and so he doesn’t know why his music is so incomplete.

(Lydia, if you favor the violinist, then you just need to convince him to stay in this town. For a soul like his to lose his music, there is no place he needs to go.)

If he stayed here, then Lydia's daily life would change dramatically. She would want to know about him more and perhaps even fall in love with him.

But then, that meant he would not be able to play beautiful music. Even if he stayed with his soul being incomplete, Lydia would never get to know the true Ian.

Could she say she liked him not knowing the true sound of his melodies that captured the moonlight so perfectly? Lydia faced the queen and shook her head.

"I want to hear his real music, Your Majesty, if you are interested in love, then please take my soul, my heart that is in love. And please, return his soul back to him," just as she finished there was a gust of wind that suddenly erupted around them like a storm.

The rough winds swiped up the nearby flowers and grass into the air and rustled and shook the trees. The fairies, no longer bothering to continue the ball, all screamed as the clouds blocked out the bright moon. The queen stood up from her throne, looking down at Lydia as her hair was brought up by the wind.

(Such a hasty little human. You've spoken the exchange. Oh well, I agree. But with this trade, you will no longer be able to fall in love.)

Ian's letter was tossed up by the wind and Lydia followed after it as it was carried out of the round stones. The light created by the fairies had disappeared and the surrounding scenery turned pitch black.

"That was stupid of you, Lydia. Going to that length for a man you just met," came Nico's voice from the darkness.

"It's alright, Nico... Besides, there will be no one interested in a changeling like me. But from this, I think I'll finally be able to know the happiness of falling in love with someone. Though it will be my first and last."



Ian's concert was held in an outdoor theater just as the moon began to rise up

again in the sky.

Since it was a small town the stage was small, but the seats were full of people. In one of the corner seats, Lydia listened as the musicians started to begin their first song. She had the ticket that he gave her in her room and decided to attend the concert for some reason.

But Lydia didn't know why she had a ticket in the first place. Last night when she awoke, she was lying down on her own bed. She had supposedly gone off to the rose meadow fairy's ball but couldn't remember anything more than that. She concluded that she must have come home from a walk overly exhausted. And as she was listening to the player's fine music flowing from their fingertips, her heart started to beat rapidly. The sad, soft melody flowed around her in her mind.

Though she never fell in love, this faint soft music made her wonder why it seemed so similar to the feeling of the painful longing for another. But Lydia began to feel irritated, because she couldn't fully grasp what the music was trying to express. Her heart felt closed like there was a cover around it and even underneath that it felt frozen over, and she wanted to feel the sounds more deeply, but even that excitement didn't come out of her.

Before she knew it, the song was over and the crowd had erupted in an outburst of applause.

Several young ladies, with flower bouquets, ran up to the front of the stage. Lydia realized she brought one rose with a ribbon tied onto it. She remembered Nico handing it to her saying that 'It's custom to bring to concerts.'

[It's to say you were moved by their performance.]

[And if I wasn't?]

[Then stomp on it was throw it at them.]

Is that the normal thing to do? Nico was quite experienced than Lydia but as he wasn't a human, his understanding of social human behavior was unreliable. But no doubt that a flower was needed to show your sign of deep inspiration. But, she didn't know. Was she moved by the performance?

Lydia felt completely lost. She couldn't understand how she couldn't appreciate this person's music. She didn't understand why she was like this, maybe

because she had a twisted personality and being a changeling must have been why her heart couldn't be touched by the beautiful sound.

Someone like me shouldn't be in a place like this.

The applause was dying out for the next song to begin. Lydia was looking down, not knowing that the violinist on the stage was looking at her with intensive eyes.

"This is a song that I dedicate to the rose meadow fairy queen," announced the violinist. "If you would accept it, I ask to please exchange it back for Ms. Carlton's heart."

Lydia gasped, looking up.

What did he say? Ms. Carlton, me!?

Still in shock, the melody of the dreamy 'Silver Moon Night' glided out into the night air. She heard of this song before. Just as she thought that, somewhere deep inside her, the forgotten memories of Ian rose out from her mind.

How he complimented her eye color. That he gave her the ticket and when he smiled at her. That she had rescued him after he stepped in a fairy ring. And how she traded with the flower fairy queen.

Where it was frozen over in her heart, the sound soaked in and warmly melted it down. Before she knew it, those melted fragments turned into tears and trickled down her face to wet the rose on her lap. She finally was feeling with all her heart. This was Ian's music that she truly wanted to hear. Her ears soaked in the melody which required both the gift of the player and the heart of the listener to be complete.

The crowd in the seats were all dazed by the 'Silver Moon Night.' Not long afterwards, there was another, greater eruption of applause, to which the violinist smiled back in satisfaction.

But Lydia suddenly became worried. If he dedicated this song to the flower fairy queen, it was a dangerous trade. Why would he do such a thing?

She suddenly realized why and quickly exited the theater. She found Nico lying down behind some bushes near the theater doors and dashed over to him.

"What is the meaning of this, Nico? Why would he trade with the rose meadow fairy queen?"

“He just asked of a way that would help you.”



“Nico, you told him that? Th-That means you appeared in front of him like that?”

“I made sure to stand on all fours.”

“If you talked than the act would be meaningless!”

“Oh who cares, Lydia. By the way, he was the one who carried you home after you were thrown out of the queen’s ball. That letter, I handed it back to him. He was a little surprised, but that was all. I did also explain what happened, just in case.”

“But, that sort of exchange... He will never to able to play the ‘Silver Moon Night’ ever again!” moaned Lydia.

“I don’t mind,” said a voice. Ian stepped out from behind a stone pillar of the theater.

“I was so nervous to try to please the queen that it was the best performance I ever had. Most likely I won’t be able to play as good as tonight’s ‘Silver Moon Night’. I’m satisfied as long as it stays in the hearts of the people who came tonight.”

“Mister Reynolds...”

“Thank you, Lydia. I don’t have anything missing now. In fact, I’m certain that from now on I’ll be able to play better than ever. That’s why you shouldn’t lose anything either.”

His smile made her so happy but also made her heart stink just a little.

“Oh yes, this,” Lydia remembered and held out the rose.

“Your performance was beautiful. I’m so glad I was able to listen to it... I don’t know how to say this right, but just one rose wouldn’t be enough to express my excitement, more like I want to give you a ton of elderberries.”

Wiping her wet eyes, Lydia’s desperate words must have reached him.

“Thank you, I’m honored,” he said.

They parted after shaking hands. Carving the warmth of that hand in her heart, Lydia walked her way home with the cat beside her on his hind legs.

“By the way, Lydia. Only fairies would be thrilled to receive elderberries. You need to learn human etiquette.”

She must have felt good that night as she didn’t feel like stamping down on that fluffy tail of his.

Short Story: A Fairytale of a Snow Crystal

[Inquiries regarding fairies are always welcome. Fairy Doctor, Lydia Carlton.]

The client was an elderly woman. Wearing a slightly ostentatious saffron-colored dress and a fur cape, this woman appeared alone on Lydia's doorstep around sunset.

"My goodness, so you were proposed to by a fairy?" gasped Lydia to the woman smiling like a pure young girl.

"That's right. I would love to accept it. But my whole family disagrees with me. I cannot understand how marrying a fairy could be improper at all."

"Yes I see, but there have been a few arrangements that were done in the past."

It's been so long to have such an actual job consultation. Lydia was excited and inched forward in anticipation.

"So, may I ask what sort of suitor he is?"

"He only appeared as a handsome young man to my eyes, and he did seem very different at first. But even after learning that he wasn't human I wasn't that surprised."

Then it looks like he isn't a brownie or hobgoblin that could be living around here.

"Mrs. Hadley, for a start, could you introduce me to your suitor? I could be a liaison for you two and try to convince your family."

"Really? That would be wonderful! Such a relief. I'm so glad I came to visit you."

The woman took Lydia's hands into hers. Lydia was thrilled with satisfaction. Stories about fairies proposing to humans were usually heard with young girls. But there were still so many different kinds of fairies in the world. If there was a fairy who found this pure old lady so adorable, than she could understand how such a fairy would want to propose to her.

"Then I'll go fetch us some tea. So please, make yourself comfortable. We'll discuss the details while enjoying some refreshments," offered Lydia slowly

standing up. I need to get all the details exactly. This is such a joyous opportunity. It might be finally be my first step to be acknowledged as a fairy doctor!

For the public, fairies only were characters in children's bedtime stories. If it was not too long ago, then nobody would have doubted their existence. But when it rolled into the 19th century, with all the drastic changes in industry, all the people of England who had been neighbors with fairies, had forgotten such beings, with rapid speed.

But Lydia knew that they all still exist. Spotting them constantly and hearing their voices wherever she went. Someday, like her late mother, Lydia wanted to become a Fairy Doctor that people depended on and become well respected for her good deeds. At this point, she still was an amateur but she had plenty of motivation.

"That old woman, she better not be senile," came the voice from above the shelves. A biscuit floated up into the air.

Just as her eyes followed it, a side of it was bitten into. The one with the voice that appeared, licking his lips for any crumbs, was a long haired gray cat. He sat down on top of the shelf and crossed his hind legs. The cat straightened his favorite tie and combed through his whiskers that he was so proud of, and looked down at Lydia.

"Nico! that's bad behavior!" shouted Lydia.

"But you know, in your own case, even if you can see fairies, you don't have an eye for people."

"If it's about humans, than as a human of course I'd know !" Lydia puffed out her words as she poured hot water into a pot.

"But so far, the previous client was a self-proclaimed angel. Before that was a self-proclaiming spiritualist and you believed in all their crazy fantasies and already failed miserably. Even that old lady, with her story of being proposed by a handsome fairy man, sounds like one of her dreams," said the gray cat as he waved his long tail.

He was Lydia's childhood friend and was in fact, a fairy himself. But regardless, he had no pleasant comments to give. Besides, it wasn't convincing when a cat

that didn't act like a cat was trying to persuade you something.

"This time, surely it's a true request. Because there are fairies that can transform into human form, you know." Just then, the front door bell rang repeatedly, almost vehemently. "Oh my, another visitor? Nico, would you prepare the tea?"

"What~! You overwork fairies too much."

Paying no attention to the complaining cat, Lydia rushed to the front door.

When she swung the door open, a portly gentleman stood at the door, taking off his hat.

"I believe my aunt has paid you a visit."

"Umm, do you mean Mrs. Hadley?"

"Pardon me," he said and entered the house. After spotting the old woman sitting in the drawing room sofa, he grabbed her arm roughly.

"Aunt Ruth, please stop such foolish behavior. Talking about fairies and marrying one, you are the laughing stock of the town."

"Hold on just a moment! Please don't judge like that. Catching the eye of a fairy really isn't that unusual," claimed Lydia to the sudden intruder.

The gentleman stared at Lydia with a look of disbelief.

"I see. I've heard that the Carlton daughter is an oddball, but it seems the rumors are true. Someone like you would be able to converse with a senile old woman."

"I am not senile. Who are you? Would you please leave me," said the lady.

"What are you talking about? Aunt Ruth."

"I know! my father has sent you, hasn't he? Because he can't seem to leave me of the prospects of marrying me off to that family that runs the bank."

"Good God!" cried out the man and turned towards Lydia. "As you can see, my aunt thinks of herself as a young debutante."

"Uh, but, that shouldn't mean her story about a fairy proposing was made up."

But the man, without consent, started to drag the woman out.

"Unfortunately, young miss, if you continue to speak of fairies, it'll make me doubt your sanity."

"But I am a fairy doctor! A professional about fairies, so please if you would just

listen to me..”

“Fairy doctor? Do you use ancient magical spells, young lady? Like that is believable! The people even say that you are a changeling with fairy blood. You truly are then, if fairies do exist.”

Changeling. When fairies take a human infant, they leave their own infant in its place. To Lydia, who believed she was the real daughter of this house, those rumors only stabbed at her heart. Her green eyes with shades of gold, or her sharp looking eyes and nose, seemed to be like someone from another world. Since childhood, her neighbors would periodically whisper about that part of her.

“But please do not involve my aunt in one of your fantasies. She isn’t able to tell dream and reality apart,” snapped the man. Lydia lost her strength and didn’t attempt to stop the old lady being taken away by her nephew.

People live their lives as if fairies don’t exist, yet they talk so negatively about them as if they just suddenly remembered their existence. This grand country was too busy accepting new inventions and cultures from around the world but had the time to throw out the irrational and vague.

But the link between fairies was not broken, that was all the more reason that people unconsciously tried to ignore their presence and tried to forget about them.

“That woman was senile, just like I said,” boasted the cat leaning up against the kitchen door on his hind legs, sipping freshly poured tea from a teacup he held in his paw.

Why can’t he just burn his tongue. Lydia thought as she breathed a sigh.

“But I just don’t think so. Even if she thought of herself as a young girl, would she go to the length of using a fairy as a suitor? It could have just as well as been a handsome human man.” As she said that, Lydia moved her gaze over to the door and spotted something shining lying on the doorway. “Oh, I wonder if Mrs. Hadley dropped something.” It was a clear crystal made into a pendant. Picking it up, it was shaped like a snow fallen from the sky and was icy cold to the touch. “This, it’s a snow crystal!” It was a crystal born from the depths of the waters. She heard that it was made using the bubbles from the fresh water

living fairies and formed by gathering shining crystallizing star particles to create this beautiful six pedal flower.

“Oh, but could it be real?”

Taking it into his paw, Nico gave it a lick. “Hmm, it tastes like ice.”

“Nico! Now you’ll make it melt!”

“A true snow crystal doesn’t melt. Even if you throw it in a fire,” he said and dropped it into his teacup. In the milk tea, the clear ice flower only remained bloomed.

“Then Nico, this means Mrs. Hadley really did meet a fairy. Because this could only be found by a fairy that lives in the water. She really was telling the truth.”

“Well Lydia, now that’s troublesome. A fairy that lives in water and can change shape to a handsome human can only be those ferocious kelpies.”

“Kelpie? That’s impossible. I never saw one near this town.”

“It could have came down the river.”

They were beautiful horses that lived in fresh waters. But those who were caught by its seductive appearance and approached it were said to be dragged into the watery depths to be eaten. By the next morning, according to the tales, only the untouched livers were thrown back onto shore by the water’s edge.

“Oh no, if it was planning to invite Mrs. Hadley into the water... Nico, we need to go!”

“To?”

“Check if there really is a kelpie or not.”

“Oh no. I don’t want to. I have no dream of coming out as just my liver.”

She grabbed the scruff of Nico’s neck before he could disappear.

“So you have a liver even though you’re a supernatural cat?”

“Come on let go! You’re ruffling my fur!”

“So you’re coming?”

“Alright, geesh, you are so short-tempered. But the night’s too dangerous, so we go tomorrow, understood?”

After setting him down, the cat angrily snorted through his nose and swiftly combed down his fluffy gray fur with his paws.



The next day, Lydia immediately headed to the river, located at the edge of town. There wasn't anybody at the riverside where its reflection mirrored only the cloudy gray sky, making it even more dismal.

Lydia, along with Nico, cautiously approached the water's edge while careful to spot any sight of unnatural ripples on the water surface.

"Oi, Lydia, there's somebody there."

Holding down her hair that was blown around by the strong winds, she squinted into the distance, to see a figure standing by the riverbed.

"Mrs. Hadley! What are you doing here?"

It was the visitor from yesterday. Lydia dashed over to her.

Covering her gray hair with a shall, Ruth Hadley lifted her face from her gaze from the water surface.

"My, Miss Carlton. Please forgive me for leaving yesterday. It seems like my father won't approve my marriage with a fairy."

"Um, about that, I..."

"But, I was so thankful for your kindness. You were the only one who believed me."

"Mrs. Hadley."

"It's Ruth. Please call me Ruth. I want us to become friends."

"Yes, of course."

"I was just waiting to meet him. This is such perfect timing! I'll introduce you."

"A water-horse, here?He's coming?!"

Lydia also noticed that Nico had disappeared. What a fraidy-cat.

She needed to get Mrs. Hadley away from this dangerous riverbed where a Kelpie might appear.

"Anyway. Uh, Ruth. The wind is so strong here. Why don't we head near the town?"

Just as they were about to start walking, another voice butted beside them.

"Oi, human. Are you the chit?"

Lydia whipped around to face a young man standing between them and the river. He had pitch black hair, and incredibly handsome looks that came with a splendid body. He had a beautifully well balanced face, it was such a perfect

creation that it was incomparable to any person she's ever seen. This man inspected Lydia back in a glaring way.

"Hmmm, you're surprisingly more good looking than I thought."

"How kind of you."

"And you have a nice bottom too." He traced it from atop her skirt, which made her slap him with her hand in reflex.

"What are you doing!"

Her open palm hit his cheek right on the spot. In that second, a strong wind erupted and the river surface started to ripple roughly. Right in front of Lydia's eyes, the man's body changed shape - into a dauntingly beautiful, pitch black horse.

"Ke-Kelpie? Ruth, is he the one?"

"No..., he had silver hair..."

Guarding Ruth behind her, Lydia backed away.

"Oh, so you weren't the human chit. I see, seems like I've forgotten how humans age so quickly."

"Who are you? What happened to Ruth's suitor?"

"I came to see what kind of woman my brother's bride is going to be." The kelpie slowly circled around the two of them. Shaking, Lydia searched inside her pocket.

"He speaks about leaving our kelpie's territory and marrying a human. Of course I objected, but he wouldn't listen. So naturally, I became curious as what sort of woman could do that to him. If she turned out to be trash, I was planning to eat her myself."

"Don't come any closer!" threatened Lydia, holding out a twig of hawthorn. "I am a fairy doctor. I won't allow you to harm her."

"A tiny human like you? First of all, a petty evil-warding-charm like that won't effect me." The water-horse neighed loudly, standing up in full fierce. As the black horse came closer, Lydia shivered as she was too frightened to speak. Lydia clamped her eyes shut. Then, something soft as a feather touched her face.

"Brother, please stop."

Cautiously opening her eyes, Lydia saw that there was a silver-haired young man standing in front of her, as if guarding them from the black unseelie court. That soft touch must have been his long hair, no his mane.

“Ruth....!!” the young man rushed over to Ruth who had fainted from fear.



It was half a century ago. Ruth grew up in the Highlands, the area where water-horses were said to live. The young Ruth met a water-horse who happened to be in his human form and both fell in love. But she already had an engagement her father made, and on top of that the man disappeared from her, fearing the time when she'd come to find out he was ferocious fairy of human eating kind. But even after many years, he still couldn't forget her, and thinking that now was the only time since a human's lifespan was so short and followed the river back to this town.

The younger brother kelpie told Lydia that Ruth had not forgotten about him. She kept the snow crystal that he gave her. He was overjoyed at their reunion and proposed to her immediately but still couldn't tell her that he was a water-horse.

He was soft spoken and had graceful manners. Unlike his older brother, he was more slender but he too had the perfectly sculptured beauty. These two water-horses were now in the Carlton house.

Of course, they were in human form, but Lydia couldn't stop thinking how unreal this seemed to herself. But in reality here in front of her were two gorgeous handsome men, one silver-haired man sitting politely with his hands resting on his thighs and one black-haired man leaning back in a chair with his feet on the table in an arrogantly, daunting manner.

And they're horses. Horses!, she bitterly muttered, for no reason.

The younger brother carried the unconscious Ruth to this house and she was currently resting in one of the bed chambers. Lydia was listening silently to the water-horse's story.

“Fairy Doctor, I will leave this land. I shouldn't have come here in the first place.”

“Oi, you are alright with that?” shouted the older brother fairy.

“Brother, weren’t you opposed?”

“As kin, I oppose. In any case, humans die too quick after all. Even if we take them to the fairy world, there still is their lifespan. But I saw how you were suffering all this time. To watch you continue to be heartbroken is unbearable.”

“Well now, so you do have a good side,” said Lydia.

“Of course I do. How low were you thinking of this great kelpie?”

“A barbarian kelpie.”

“You bloody bitch, do you want to get eaten?”

“Hmph, I know perfectly well that a kelpie away from water is powerless. Or I wouldn’t invite you into my house.”

“Such a conceited chit. Really, what is so great about human females?”

“Ruth is a modest and polite woman.” After the younger said so, he hastily turned towards Lydia. “No, that was, I mean, human women are each unique and...”

“....It’s alright. I don’t need to have a horse try to be polite.”

“Stop saying horse. We are noble water kelpies! But this one here, he’s defective. Normally we each have our own territory and live in solitude. But he whimpers about that being lonely and always follows me around. First of all, the reason he meets a human and chooses one as a mate is because he’s a good for nothing. So I will guarantee it, a normal kelpie couldn’t be able to live happily with a human, but he could!”

“But your young brother has already said he’ll leave. I think that’s best. A human and kelpie marriage, however you think of it, is impossible. Even Ruth fainted after seeing your transformation. Finding out that her lover was a water-horse must have been a great shock for her.”

The black haired kelpie, became broodingly silent, possibly from regretting what he said.

“It’s not your fault, brother. It was better this way. She was going to find out regardless, I’m happy just that she still remembered me after all this time,” said the younger.

“Well then,” said Lydia, standing up and taking out the snow crystal from her skirt pocket. “This was a gift you gave to Ruth, correct?”

“Why do you have it?” asked the older.

“Ruth dropped it. Anyhow, as long as this is destroyed, you’ll never be able to go near her again, right?”

It was a method used periodically to cut off contact from the Unseelie courts - by destroying the gift you received from the one you want to cut off connections with. That way, that fairy will lose sight of that human.

“Hey, there’s no need to go that far,” interrupted the older.

“No, I agree. Please go ahead,” cut in the younger, softly but sure.

They were fairies that were savage beasts. But kelpies, with their strong and noble prescience, attracted humans. Obviously that was their means of capturing humans to feed on them, but seeing how this quiet, fragile looking silver-haired man cared so deeply about Ruth, and exhibited how he was backing away for her sake and suffering because of it, Lydia had to keep reminding herself that the ferocious blood still runs deep in him.

“But, hey now, Lydia, do you know how to destroy this snow crystal?” After the brothers left, Nico slowly reappeared his invisible body while leaning back against the sofa armrest and shamelessly grinned.

“Nico, how dare you abandon me and run away!”

“I didn’t abandon you. I just made myself invisible.”

“Well, I’ll let that be the case this time. So tell me about the snow crystal.”

“Unfortunately I don’t know anything either. All I know is that even if you tried smashing or burning it’s useless effort.”

“That’s all? Then stop acting all self-important.” When the occasion really demanded his help, this cat was useless.

“But, Ruth may know,” he said facing his turned-up chin towards the door. Ruth, who had been resting in the next room, apparently had woken, and was standing in the doorway puzzled.

“Ruth, you’re awake. How do you feel?” asked Lydia, going over to her and taking her hand to lead her to sit back down on the sofa.

Looking bewildered, Ruth combed her fingers through her long unraveled gray hair as if confirming if they were really hers.

“I’d forgotten. I’ve grown so old. I could never have gone with him from the

start.”

Hearing those words, Lydia grew puzzled.

“Aren’t you afraid of kelpies?”

“Kelpie? Aah, yes, during my childhood I was told by a priest that they were ferocious water-horses. He taught me not to go near the water’s edge by myself. That’s why I had a small feeling that he might be a kelpie.”

“....Yet you still fell in love?”

“I wasn’t frightened at all. Because he was always so kind. But because he was so gentle, he didn’t take me into the water.”

So she had realized he was a kelpie. Ruth only fainted because the black water-horse had threatened to eat her and not because she was shocked that her lover was a kelpie. Misunderstanding that, the younger kelpie made his decision of leaving her.

“When he first left, I was filled with regret. Knowing he was a kelpie, I realized I must have been hesitant somewhere deep down. There are good and bad people in our society, and yet I don’t know why I couldn’t fully believe in him. Getting married and coming back to this town, even after so many decades, that regret never went away. I wasn’t terribly unhappy, but I couldn’t be with child with my husband, and after our nephew succeeded the family business and after I became a widow, I continued to feel like a foreigner in the Hadley house.”

“And so you thought to go with him this time?”

“If he, whose appearance hasn’t changed from that time, would still have me one more time....”

But to trust a kelpie was unimaginable as a fairy doctor. Even if the younger brother was indeed different from the others, Lydia was told by her mother that a fairy doctor’s duty was to keep people away from the evil fae. Human and fairies, at times crossed paths and could establish a good relationship, but there are times when both sides should not be mingled together. Especially water horses like them who were classified as unseelie courts, their danger was immeasurable to those who were not familiar with them and so marriage with them were not allowed so easily.

“It was stupid of me. Even if he didn’t change, I have. Seeing how I am now, he must have been so disappointed. Because he has such a kind soul, he didn’t say so.” Ruth spotted the snow crystal pendant Lydia had resting on her lap and breathed a small sigh.

“Still obsessed with this like an old sore, he must have pitied me,” and picking it up from Lydia’s hand, Ruth took off the chain. She softly hanged the snow crystal down to her open mouth.

“What are you doing?!”

“He said if I swallow it, it’ll melt and disappear. If that happens, then he wouldn’t be able to see me again... Sooner, I should have done this much sooner, before he saw my aged body.”

So that was the way to destroy the snow crystal. And then Lydia realized that the kelpie had deliberately revealed to Ruth on how to keep him at bay. He himself was aware of the natural instincts of being a kelpie. That’s why he told Ruth, who would find out his true nature eventually so that she wouldn’t be frightened, and so he wouldn’t have to see her terrified face. That was the true feelings that he kept in the depths of his heart. Humans and water-horses do not suit each other, they aren’t suppose to. But.....

“Wait, stop!” cried Lydia, snatching the snow crystal from Ruth’s hand, and looked down at her bewildered face.

“You can’t give up! He loves you even now. But he was terrified that you’d find out he was a kelpie and come to hate him. Aaaah! why do both of you have to worry so much about such small things! If you truly care for one another then just tell him the truth, and find out what he’s really thinking!”

“Uh, but....”

“Now come with me. If we don’t hurry those two will leave this town!” she said and yanked on Ruth’s arm. Lydia left the house and headed towards the river. Ruth ended up being dragged along like a doll by Lydia’s heated determination. Reaching the bank of the river that was exposed to the wind, the water surface still had its dark color and reflected the gray clouds on its surface. Weaving through the scattered grove of trees, Lydia approached the river. Finally stopping, she gave a good look across the surface.

“Oi, now Lydia, I thought you were going to cut the ties from the kelpies?” asked Nico, who had followed along after them.

“.....Yes, as a fairy doctor that’s what should be my priority. But I’m friends with Ruth. I couldn’t pull the two apart when they are so deeply in love with each other.”

Lydia turned back to the water.

“Kelpie, can you hear me? Ruth says she isn’t afraid even if you’re a kelpie! That’s why I need to be certain. What about you?! Do you not love her because she is an old lady now?!”

The silent reflection abruptly turned into rippling waves. The two water-horses rose out from the splashing rolling waves. The silver and black brother’s manes glittered with rainbow sparkling droplets and both of them ascended to stand on the water’s surface. They looked as if wrapped in a glowing light. The air surrounding them was colored with a mysterious glow that shined from the separate realm of the fairy world. Suddenly feeling a slight shivering apprehension of danger from this unbelievable spectacle in front of her, but for the sake of Ruth, Lydia bravely raised her voice.

“Ahh, geesh, you’re still thinking too much?! Oi, younger brother, is that your idea of being a man?! Even if you’re a water-horse or poor, as long as you have love, you’d still try to woo her! That’s normal!”

“Being a kelpie and poor aren’t the same thing,” Nico pointed out, which she ignored.

“So you’re not coming? You’re fine with that? Alright then, Ruth is going to swallow this snow crystal!”

Nico had periodically pointed out to her that she was too short-tempered but she couldn’t change that now. Lydia angrily shoved the snow crystal to Ruth.



In that moment, the silver kelpie trotted forward. He transformed gracefully into a beautiful human man as he neared them.

“Ruth, you haven’t changed one bit. All I see is the shape of your soul. If I truly don’t frightened you, then would you please spend your remaining time with me?”

Squeezing the snow crystal in her hand, Ruth replied with a faint nod. Then she turned to Lydia with a smile on her face and softly hugged her.

“Lydia, thank you... I’m so happy that we became friends....”

Unraveling her arms and silently backing away, Ruth slowly walked over to him. As she got closer, the light that was surrounding the water-horse spilled over onto her and turned her gray hair into a bright red, and Lydia watched with watery eyes, as an energetic young lady was embraced by the man’s arms.



“And you had just made a human friend. Yet you have to send her off to the fairy world,” said the gray cat sitting on a chair, twitching his whiskers as if they were enjoying the fragrance of the tea rising up from the cup he held in his front paw.

“There’s nothing I can do about it now. It was for Ruth’s sake.”

“So you gave up making human friends and decided to increase your fairy friends instead?” asked Nico glancing suspiciously over to the black wavy haired man crunching down on biscuits.

“What is this. Such wimpy food.”

Lydia, shaking her hands that gripped the teapot, knitted her brows on top of a frown.

“Why are you here in the first place, kelpie!”

“Well my younger brother went off to the new frontier with his bride. As for me, it’s quite boring now...”

“Doesn’t mean that you have to come to my house!”

“I’ve started to be interested in humans as well.”

“Even if you were to observe Lydia, she might not equal to an actual human being’s standard.”

“What? Nico! What does that suppose to mean?!” shouted Lydia. She didn’t realize that soon enough, people would be whispering about the Carlton daughter who was having a loud conversation with only a cat in her house.

Short Story: Love fortune-telling, as you wish

He loves me, he loves me not, he loves me,
.....he loves me not.....

The last petal fluttered to the ground along with those last words, and the girl who was speaking let out a breath of sigh.

However many times she did this game, it was the same result.

It was like the flower was trying to tell her that it was useless to keep raising her expectations, but she couldn't give up and pulled out another flower from her selling basket.

Just then, a whimsical gust of wind came out of no where and blew off the hat off her head along with the flower in her hand.

Her hat tumbled across the side walk and stopped at a man's feet who was walking her way, the man picked it up and walked over to her, and he smiled friendly at her as he handed her the hat he picked up.

"Are you Sara, the flower girl?"

"Yes I am."

Instead of thanking him, Sara's eyes was preoccupied with examining this young man's appearance which didn't go along with this disorderly public market place.

His bright blond hair peeked out from under his black top hat. His upper slim body was dressed in a sleek, smooth frock coat, and he wore shoes that were so brightly polished that the dirt around them looked like they were backing off from contacting them.

On top of that, there was absolutely nothing to complain about each feature on his handsome face.

As Sara stared at him in awe, not realizing how rude she was being.

"I hear that if one does a fortune telling game with one of your flowers, then it comes out a good outcome. Is that true?"

The elegant words that rolled out on his soft voice was perfect Queen's English.

She hardly ever saw an upper class visitor like him at the market during the day. People like him would come when it turned dark and they would all be sucked into the opera house, Theater Royal Covent Garden that imposingly took up the space across the street.

Did this man, who appeared when the sun hadn't even set yet, come just to buy Sara's flowers?

"Who knows, although there are a lot of people who claim that."

From who knows when, when people did a fortune telling with one of Sara's flowers, the rumor spread that a good fortune would come to them. Because of that, many women and men who had love troubles came to buy her flowers. She was happy to get the business, so when she was asked if they would get a good outcome, then Sara decided not to particularly deny it.

However, if this person had something he wanted to try a fortune telling about, then that was quite surprising.

"If it was you sir, then wouldn't there be no use for you to try? I think if you would just show her your interest, then she'd be easy to catch."

"I couldn't say so. For example if it was you, would you fall in love with me that easily?"

He grinned like a little prankster. His smile wasn't one like the upper classmen's daunting, hard to approach feeling and actually very warm and friendly.

"I-I wouldn't...., whatever the circumstances may be,"

"Is that because you have someone you fancy? You seemed to be playing the game quite seriously."

Finding out that he had been watching her, Sara became embarrassed, and purposefully pulled down her hat over her eyes.

"But you are a very charming young lady. And if you're in a troublesome love, then wouldn't you know? You can't control someone else's feelings."

"Uh-hm....., you're right. I hope your outcome is a good one."

Even if it was someone as privileged as him, she felt a sense of affinity towards him who mulled over things just like her, and so she handed a bundle of margarets to him.

"If it doesn't go well, I'll come and buy from you again. As two souls suffering

with unrequited love, there's always the option of comforting each other. And from there, a new love could blossom."

He gave a soft snicker, and took his flowers and handed her a copper coin.

But inspecting him once more, he sure was a gentleman who said capricious things. She never heard of an aristocrat trying to flirt with a flower selling girl.

"Sir, you're quite the strange one. If you want your love to be returned, then shouldn't you stop trying to put on a good face with every girl you meet?"

"I see. That's a good idea. I've really taken a fancy to you now."

He left her with the last words like her words of advice didn't work on him, and left. What a strange man, thought Sara, and because she was so occupied with that opinion of him, she forgot to hand him his change.

She panicked and dashed to follow him, but she was caught in the crowd mingling in the market area, and so she ended up losing sight of him.

I wonder who in the world he was.

"Oh, well. As long as I keep around the opera house, I'm bound to meet him again."



"Edgar, what is the meaning of this!"

Lydia, who had been waiting for him when he returned, came charging into the entrance hall, and pressed the young earl who was the master of this mansion for an answer.

"Oh, hello, Lydia, your angry face is such a charming sight. By the way, what are you talking about?"

"About the opera. I said I wasn't going. And yet, I was told by Ms Harriett that I need to dress because that's in my schedule. What's going on?"

"Um-hmm, since you said that you wouldn't go last week, I changed it to today."

When I say I wouldn't go, that means I won't go whether it's last week or today! Was what she really wanted to scream, but Lydia was made her keep her mouth shut every time she was met with Edgar's quibble.

And besides, the reason he didn't let her know until the last minute was so that he could force her to accompany him.

As rage boiled in her head, she thought it was pointless to be toyed by him, and so Lydia followed after Edgar into the gentleman's room.

"I told you that I'm not comfortable in going to lavish places. If you want a woman to accompany you, then you should just invite an aristocrat's daughter. There wouldn't be a girl who would refuse your invitation."

He whipped around to face her.

"Then, why is it that you don't want to go?"

"That's because...., isn't it in a foreign language? Then I wouldn't understand it anyways."

"It's alright. It's Rossini's La Cenerentola. Although it's in Italian, the story is Cinderella that you're familiar with. And I'll interpret it for you by your side, so I'm sure you'll enjoy it."

"But...."

A place like the opera house was a place where aristocrats would gather and introduce themselves to each other, might be a place that was too heavy a load on a country girl's shoulders like hers.

And yet, Edgar was apt to bring Lydia along to gatherings of the upper class. Apparently, he wanted to make a cognizance of her as the private fairy doctor of his earldom to the upper class, but she felt he just wanted to show her off because she was a rare sight.

Edgar Ashenbert had the title of Earl of Ibrazel. In the current 19th century, it was rare for someone to believe that the earl actually had his estate in the land of the fairy world, but at least, faeries who accepted him as their new lord were living on his estate that was in England.

For Edgar who couldn't see faeries, Lydia was hired as the fairy doctor who would handle everything dealing with fairies.

It hadn't been that long since her employment, but Lydia had been escorted by Edgar since then and has been introduced to several aristocrats.

Fairy doctors were specialists who knew anything when it came to the fae, and it was their job to solve the troubles that erupted between them and humans, and they were once all over England, but now practically extinct. That's why this job was difficult to be understood by people.

And most of the people would look at her like they were looking at the rare sight of a fairy.

Gradually, she began to think that there might be no point in forcing herself in come out in front of the public, and so she found it a great bother to go to the opera house.

But Edgar still seemed like he was going to continue persuading Lydia who was shrinking away from the idea.

“You’re going to make me go alone? You’re saying you’re okay with me being laughed at for being jilted by my partner? I need to enter the London high society for the first time without any support or patron. I agonized over how a fledgling like me could leave a lasting impression to the people of the upper class society, and I thought that if I had you by my side, then I could confidently go out, and yet you’re going to abandon me.”

This man’s level of coaxing people by threatening or pretending to cry wasn’t the average level. Furthermore this man had the looks like a prince and made any women become his puppet.

For a man like him who was pasted the level of unreserved and confident, but more like became the center of the crowd whenever and whenever he went, it was hard to imagine that he would become faint-hearted just at the thought of going to the opera house.

“Please don’t say you won’t go.”

And yet, she was fully aware of what he was thinking, but Lydia some how wasn’t able to turn him away after he pleaded her like that.

“I won’t be able to act like a noblewoman.”

“All I ask is to sit and smile,” he said and immediately called for the head maid, which meant he took Lydia’s vague reply as her consent.

“Harriett, wasn’t there a lime green dress that I had ordered. The color the same as Lydia’s eyes. It’s troublesome if she goes as the same color as a certain noblewoman who dominates the ton, but we’ll be safe if we go with that.”

I can’t believe you have to consider such a detail like that. Lydia didn’t know if she should be in awe or shocked at how quick Edgar was to do his research.

“Lydia, will that one be alright?”

But now, Lydia could only give up and nod.

Lydia was being dragged along with Edgar to different places, and told that this was part of her job, so she was supplied with dresses to go out as many as a lady. However, even after it had been a while, she suddenly worried about something.

“Now that I think about it, I never had myself measured, so how were you able to have them make them?”

“The tailor’s wife had nearly the same stature and height as you.”

“So she was the same size as me.”

“And so, I asked them to shorten the breast and waist seven inches.”

Huh?

“W-Why would you know something like that!”

“One could guess that somehow or other.”

One couldn’t normally guess that, somehow or other.

This philanderer man was absolutely unbelievable.

Lydia’s head felt dizzy from shock or maybe it was embarrassment.

The one who entered the room was a young man with hazel-colored skin. It was Edgar’s loyal servant.

“Lord Edgar, you had forgotten this in the carriage.”

Raven placed a small Margaret bouquet onto the table.

“Oh, yes. I had found a flower girl who was rumored at the Covent Garden whose flower game is said to have a great mark.”

“Was she as the rumors said?” asked Raven.

“Yes, she surpassed the rumors.”

“So you already tried it?” asked Lydia.

“No, the flower girl was black-haired and tender-hearted, and very cute.”

So you were more interested in that part of the rumor?

“But unfortunately, she already had someone she fancied.”

He handed the bouquet to Lydia and plucked out a Margaret from it.

“Oh, well, I have you.”

“I’m just hired as a fairy doctor, and I’m not your toy.”

“You’re cold as already. Then let’s try the flower game. To test if you will fall in

love with me or not.”

Lydia didn't even want to reply and so turned her head the other way, but he started to pluck the white Margaret petals one after another.

As he alternately repeated 'fall in love, not fall in love,' she couldn't help but be a little interested even though she thought lightly of this flower game.

“Falls in love.”

Right in front of Lydia's eyes, he plucked the last petal and gave her a winning smile.

“Does it seem like the flower game's magic is going to work?”

“.....It would never work.”

It was just when she turned around to leave. Something wiggled up against Lydia's foot.

S-Snake!

When she figured out what it was, Lydia let out a horrified scream and jumped over to Edgar who was beside her.



“Nooooooooooo! Get it away, throw it oooooout!”

Raven was swift to capture it, but Lydia's legs were still wobbled.

“You're afraid of snakes?”

“Why is there a snake in a place like this!”

“It must have lost its way into here. But it’s alright, it’s just a small snake.”

She was about to lift her head, but seeing that Raven was still standing there with it in his hand, she swallowed down another scream.

“W-What are you doing! Hurry up and toss it out!”

“Lord Edgar, may I throw it out?”

He was conscientious and calmly asked his master.

“Hmmm, well, I’d like to stay like this a little longer,”

Hearing that, Lydia finally realized that she was clinging onto Edgar. But Raven was still beside them and holding onto the snake, so she couldn’t move.

“Hurry up already-----!”

Edgar gave his permission, and Raven finally tossed the snake out the window.

After breathing a sigh of relief, she rushed to left go and get away from him who she was gripping onto, but Edgar slipped his arm around her back as if reluctant to part from her and whispered to her:

“Was it better if I had them shorten your measurement one more inch?”

“Huh?”

“Your waist.”

Lydia whipped her hand out to slap him, but Edgar, who let go of her, was swift to evade her attack.

“Miss Lydia, please let’s start the preparations,” said the head maid who returned with the lime green dress in her hands. Lydia flashed a glare at Edgar who was grinning at her and left the room along with the head maid.

“Oi, Lydia, there’s something I spotted,” said the fairy cat Nico by her feet.

He was Lydia’s partner, and normally walked up on his two hind feet and wore a necktie and cared about his appearance. However, right now, he deliberately was walking on all-fours to not make the head maid suspicious and whispered to Lydia.

“What?”

“I briefly saw a fairy come in from outside.”

“.....Did that fairy, perhaps, played the prank with that snake?”

“Maybe.”

Even if that were so, if it was a fairy that played a prank to that level, then it

could just be a hobgoblin that lived around this area.

It wasn't an evil fairy. However, it was unforgivable to Lydia for releasing a snake.

"Nico, find that fairy and make sure to capture it."

"No, I don't want to, it's too much work."

Even if he was her partner, he was this kind of character.

"I let you know while I was at it, so be careful."

The capricious fairy cat said those last words and in a poof, he vanished.



In the end, Lydia didn't have any time to spare for the fairy who released the snake.

Right after she was done getting dressed, she was brought to the Theater Royal Covent Garden by Edgar.

She was escorted to a box seat along with him, and she found out that that was a special seat for the duchess, Lady Masefield, of course, after she was escorted to that seat.

She fumed 'You kept this away from me as well!' in her head, but it was too late to do anything about that now.

If there were going to join the graceful lady duchess of the opera house, then they would draw the attention from the other seats.

For Edgar, who had just recently returned to England, this would be the chance in a lifetime to spread his name throughout the ton.

He is a calculating man to no ends.

At this sudden encounter, Lydia became extremely nervous, but somehow managed to bow a curtsy that she had recently learned.

But her tight nervousness soon unraveled. The duchess was a polite and graceful lady and welcomed Lydia with a warm and friendly attitude.

"I hear you're able to see faeries," said the duchess, in a natural tone that showed she didn't have any feelings of doubt.

"Lydia, it seems the duchess had witnessed a fairy before."

To Edgar's words, the duchess softly smiled.

"It isn't like I saw it that clearly. Long ago, something unexplainable happened,

so I was thinking that it might be because of a fairy, is all.”

The reason that Edgar wanted to bring Lydia at all costs seemed to be for this. Because he must have thought this would be the best way to grab the attention of the duchess.

He was a man that took any opportunity to speak sweet words to Lydia, and to top it off he would make people do as he says like that, so he was even more difficult to deal with.

But in Lydia’s case, the story about the fairies was something curious for her. She regained her focus and asked the Duchess.

“Is it alright if I ask about what happened?”

“It took place before I got married. When I was spending time at my country manor in Summerset, my maid told me that there were many fairies living around that area. If you leave a cup of milk on your windowsill, then you’d find that the milk had decreased. And so after that I started to leave some milk on the windowsill every night.”

Apparently, the Duchess had two suitors at that time. One of them was, of course, the current Duke of Masefield. Although he was only the second son in the aristocracy at that time. The other man was an officer that had just recently graduated from the military academy.

After wavering over the two, her eyes came across a Margaret flower in the garden and she decided to play a fortune-telling game.

As she called out each man’s name one by one, she plucked a petal off one by one. And however many times she did that game, it always came out with the same result.

A Margaret flower is said to have an irregular number of petals, and that’s why it is often used for this fortune-telling game, but for some reason or another, she always came to the same name at the last petal.

And then, the duchess claimed that she had the faint feeling that something was trying to manipulate and change the number of petals during the middle of the game.

“At that moment, from the shadow of the Margaret flower petal, I thought I saw a small green colored creature move. I thought I also heard a faint

whispering voice. Although it could have just been the wind.”

It’s definitely a fairy! thought Lydia.

“Fairies have a talent in manipulating people, and mixing up numbers and the order. I think that, perhaps there was a brownie or a similar sort of fairy like a hobgoblin there.”

“Do you think so? But it was so mysterious, I wonder if the fairy that decides the result of the flower game can see the future?”

“I don’t think it knows the future. Those sort of fairies, usually just does it out of boredom, and play pranks without any real deep reason...”

As she was explaining, Lydia started to become worried if she wasn’t considerate by saying that a fairy was just playing a prank out of boredom for a fortune-telling that was going to decide one woman’s life decision.

But she couldn’t say anything irresponsible when it came to fairies. She was a fairy doctor.

“Um, but, even if it was a prank, the fairy really didn’t have any ill intent. It didn’t think that it was a fortune-telling game that was regarding your future, and because your grace had always left some milk, it might have wanted to tell you about itself, or so I believe.”

The duchess narrowed her eyes happily.

“I feel the love for fairies in you. You must really love the free and tiny, little souls that are free from the speculations of humans.”

It was only words, but what her grace said was filled with sympathy and compassion to Lydia and the fairies.

Lydia was so happy, and she felt like she wasn’t a stranger anymore, and so Lydia was naturally able to smile along with the duchess.

“And so, your grace, after you did the flower game, was your heart set?” asked Edgar.

“Yes, I was. I have to thank the fairy for that.”

“One should really try and trust fairies, right, Lydia?”

Edgar must have quickly sensed that she was in a good mood now. And now he was joking around by bringing up the topic about the flower fortune-telling game that is famed for being on the mark.

Lydia turned away, thinking that has nothing to do with this, but even if she took that attitude, he could clearly see through her and guess that she wasn't mad anymore. He grinned cheerfully and turned his eyes towards the stage.

"It looks like it's about to begin."

"One of my favorite singers will be coming onto the stage today."

"Oh? What part?"

"He's one of the chorus singers. He still isn't at the level to get an actual part yet."

"Is he a promising youth in your eyes?"

"I'm not sure. It's just, he resembles my husband a little when he was young."

"Then he's sure to be promising."

When Edgar said that, her lips curved up into a smile like a young girl.

Momentarily, the curtains of the stage went up.

Lydia couldn't understand of word of the lyrics, but as soon as it started, her attention was drawn to the stage.

The audience was mesmerized by the warm, pleasing tenor of the actor who played the prince, and the ladies' hearts beating at the destined meeting with Cinderella.

Eventually on the stage, when the chorus of the male actors who played the servants started, Lydia gazed up to try and figure out which one of them was the favorite of the duchess.

At that moment, she spotted something small unnaturally run across the stage.

"A fairy.....?"

When she looked through her opera glasses, there was indeed a fairy, small enough to fit in her hand. It had red hair and a hooked nose, and wore green colored clothing. Judging from those characteristics, she guessed that it was a pixie.

It was so boldly, but no one in theater had noticed it. Of course, that was because the fairy couldn't been seen by any normal human being.

As her eyes followed it, the fairy approached the men in the chorus. And just when she thought that, the fae climbed up one of the men who was particularly tall among the group.

Once it climbed to the top of the man's head, it started to pull the man's hair as he earnestly tried to continue singing.

"Ah."

Lydia nearly gasped, but she quickly covered her mouth, and watched as the man continue to sing as he was harassed by the fairy and couldn't figure out what was wrong with his right arm.

His chorus members around him glared at him with threatening eyes, which made him rush to stand up straight.

His hair was pulled on a number of times, and then his ear was finally bitten which was sure to have disrupted his melody. It wasn't a level that Lydia was able to pick up but one of the actors who noticed glared at him.

What a pity. He isn't to blame and yet he's probably going to be yelled at later. As she felt pity towards him and also wondered why the fairy was playing pranks on him only.

Maybe he was targeted because his body happened to be big and tall.

More importantly, the thing Lydia was concerned about was if he might be the man that the Duchess was talking about.

Just as she anticipated, when the curtain came down, the Duchess let out a sigh.

"Was it the tenor with the tallest height?"

The man Edgar was talking about was indeed the man who was being attacked by the fairy.

"Yes..., I wonder what was wrong. He is such a hard worker and has made sure he could perform the acts that he was given so far."

A prank by a fairy who had no ill-will, probably.

But this however, seemed a little different from that kind.

"Everyone has days they make mistakes."

Edgar said that, to which the Duchess replied "Yes, you're right."

While Lydia was thinking if she should say about the fairy, there was a voice that came out from behind the curtain.

When the Duchess said "You can enter" the one who appeared was the man who had just been performing on stage.

He had a square-ish face, large eyes and nose and thick eyebrows which gave his face a frightening, fierce look.

However, he had such a calm, soothing voice and lowered his body with its wide shoulders in a polite bow.

“Your grace, thank you so much for coming to see our stage today.”

Lydia’s eyes were paying attention to his ear that was red because it was bitten by the fairy.

“It was a fabulous performance, I’m sure going to be able to enjoy it to the end.”

“Ah....yes, please take your time....”

He slumped his shoulders apologetically, which showed that he didn’t come to say that.

Even while the duchess introduced Edgar and Lydia to him, his response was vacant and looked absent-minded.

“More than that, Hugh, don’t you have to get ready for the second act?”

The man whose name was Hugh Hogarts with red hair the same color as a pixie lowered his head in an even more humble, apologetic manner.

“....Actually, I was removed from my part for today,”

“Oh, my, is that so. But don’t let your spirits down, you still have a chance.”

“Was there a rat on the stage?” asked Edgar.

“A rat, ah, yes, probably. But I had no idea what was going on,”

“The people from the audience who were able to realize your mistake probably doesn’t even add up to one hand’s worth of number. When this is praised on tomorrow’s Times Paper as usual, then everyone in the theater would forget about it.”

That must have relieved him a little, as he relaxed the corners of his mouth. However, Lydia couldn’t get past it. Because she knew it wasn’t a rat.

“Uh, have you recently stepped in a flower bed or planted shrubbery recently?”

Lydia’s question was sure to have caught anyone off guard. Hugh made a puzzled face and even the duchess made a questioning look towards Lydia.

“Lydia, are you perhaps saying that it was the work of a fairy?”

“Uhh, well, ah, I saw a fairy... But it didn’t seem like a prank, more like I thought

it seemed like it was getting back at you for something,”

“If you step in a flower bed, do you get attacked by a fairy?”

“Oh, no, your grace. Just at times when you happen to step on a fairy that happened to be sleeping there at those kind of places or did something unlucky.”

Oh, my, oh, my, gasped the duchess as she looked over to the singer.

“What about it, Hugh.”

Being told about a fairy, it was unsure if he was able to accept it but he tried to reply in a somewhat baffled look because if he was asked by a duchess, he would need to answer. He desperately tried to think of how to reply.

“Oh, no, I don’t recall going into a place like that... Is plucking out a flower even bad? Uh, I used a Margaret once to use it for a fortune-telling game.”

“If it’s that, then it’s unrelated. It would be a different case if you were to have stomped around in a flower bed, but just because you plucked and took a flower, fairies wouldn’t get angry with you.”

But still, here fortune-telling came up again. Lydia tilted her head wondering if it was the new fashion these days.

And she even had the rude opinion that Hugh didn’t look like the type at all to bring up the talk about flower fortune-telling.

“What did you fortune-tell?”

Edgar butted himself into the man’s business out of complete curiosity. If it was fortune-telling, the main cause usually would be for love fortunete-lling. Edgar was devilishly asking that out of him because he must have had an interest in the woman that this young singer might have feelings for.

“Uh, I, it was nothing really....

“You’re one-sided feelings?”

“Yes....”

“And the result?”

“Uhh, ...however many times I do it, it comes out that I’ll be rejected.”

“Shall I introduce you to an accurate flower girl?”

“I already know. But it’s always the worst answer.”

“Then putting aside the game, don’t you still think there’s a chance?”

“Uh, I, often give a frightening first impression to women, and so I can’t even hope about there even being a chance...”

“Oh, my, Hugh, you shouldn’t think like that. There are very many wonderful qualities about you,” encouraged the Duchess.

If he remained silent, Hugh did indeed have an intimidating demeanor but after spending a moment with him, you’d realize he was a sweet-tempered person. He smiled to her words in oblige.

“But it is a problem not knowing who she is. It happened in the dark streets at night so you couldn’t have seen her face. The only definite thing I know is that it was a young woman,” mentioned the Duchess.

“Oh, I wasn’t aware that your grace was at the scene of the crime.”

“He rescued a woman who was being tormented by a drunk. But alternately ended up being wounded in place... I was passing by on my carriage but a crying young girl stopped the carriage. I was so surprised. Then I found him collapsed on the road and the girl disappeared without telling me her name.”

“And you fell in love with her? So it was love at first sight without knowing the face or name.”

“I vaguely remember that she tended my wounds. She used the ribbon that she wore and used it as gauze,” said Hugh and reached into his jacket with his hand that had a mark supposedly from that time and carefully took out a red ribbon.

“What a kind-hearted lady. I would sure love to meet her.”

Of course you would want to meet any woman. That’s the kind of man Edgar is.

“She was a girl with a very charming voice,” noted the Duchess.

“Do you have any other clues? I’ll be obliged to lend a hand out in this search,” offered Edgar.

“Wonderful! Hugh, this is a grateful offer for you. The Earl has many female acquaintances.”

The Duchess was pleased about Edgar’s help without any worry, but if she knew about the ulterior motive of this man and worried why he had so many relationships with women then she wouldn’t ever dare leave him to search for the love of the one she had high hopes for. If he were to find her he’d be sure to make an approach at her from aside.

On the other hand Hugh had already witnessed Edgar's looks that were sure to capture the attention of any woman and felt the playboy in him and decided to be evasive and replied vaguely.

The possibility of it being the fault of fairies ended right there and didn't come up again.

But even Lydia couldn't determine if it was because Hugh was targeted or because the fairy was cranky and decided it wasn't best to stir up the situation and didn't bring it up again.

By the time the show ended Lydia was whipped up in the heat of the curtain call and had forgotten about the fairy.

Drifting in the reverberations of the finale, Lydia exited the Opera house as she hummed to the tune of the music.

"I'm glad you enjoyed it."

She was frustrated at first but Lydia decided to not fuse any longer. The opera's singing, music and acting were all too wonderful.

"Let's come again," said Edgar optimistic. And it was upsetting that she naturally replied 'yes' to his offer.

Edgar knows how to entertain others. With his cogent aggressiveness and if you forget the fact that you are being used, then you wouldn't feel displeased by his invitation.

Because he was a man far from fidelity in regards to women, Lydia was determined to take caution and keep a distance from him, but because it was like this she couldn't refuse strongly and probably ends up being dragged around to different places.

But Lydia had to admonish herself as she felt she was slowly warming up to Edgar.

"But I don't like it being so sudden like today."

"I'll be careful."

I can't believe a word of that, she thought to herself but then she looked up to notice the sight of the fairy from before on one of the carriage roofs that was lined up in front of the theater.

When their eyes met, the creature widened its in surprise, jumped off the

carriage and ran off.

"That fairy.., it's that pixie!"

"Huh?"

She ran after in determined to capture it rushing into the depths of an alleyway. But eventually she lost sight of the creature. The area she was in looked like the backstreets of the market and had crates and pushcarts lined up in this cramped space.

It would be next to impossible to try to find a tiny fairy in this crammed place. Just as she had given up and was about to turn back there was a young man that crept out from between the crates.

It was clear that he was angry as he approached her.

"That really hurt, throwing that rock at me."

Since he was lying there asleep he must be a drunk or a hoodlum, but it must have been true that he was hit by a rock, as she could spot blood on his forehead.

"...It wasn't me."

"Who else could have done it than you!"

This is bad. Lydia tried to step back. But the man grabbed her arm and roughly threw her down. Looking down at Lydia on the ground, he grinned.

"You got to pay for my doctor's fee, young lady."

"That small cut couldn't convince anyone," said Edgar who appeared behind the man.

"Who the bloody hell are you? Do you want a scar as well?" The man revealed a knife.

But before he could use it, Edgar raised his walking stick in a flash. The man was unprepared for a seemingly gentleman to suddenly attack and stumbled back from the hit.

Edgar didn't stop there, he reached for the man and twisted his wrist and captured the knife.

But then he smiled playfully as he pointed the knife he took.

"How much do you want? I'll be happy to raise your injuries to that amount."

Even if it seemed like a light threat, Edgar's eyes shined cold like death at times

like these.



“Lydia, are you hurt?” asked Edgar turning around as if nothing happened and throwing away the knife in the ditch.

“I’m fine....” You must be the more dangerous one to look out for. She took his offer and used his hand to stand up.

Just then Lydia spotted the pixie from the shadows of the crates. The fairy threw away the rock it was holding with its hands and raced after the escaped man.

“More importantly what happened? You just suddenly ran off like that.”

“It’s that pixie. It was the one that threw the rock at the man to scare me off.”

Now that she thought about it, Nico said that the snake from earlier appeared along with the presence of a fairy, which could mean that it was that pixie who could have done it.

That just made it even more confusing for Lydia to know why she was chosen as a target.

“Pixie?”

“The fairy that was messing with Hugh. I wonder if this could be related to the flower girl?” mumbled Lydia in thought.

“It must be. Even Hugh said he played the game with the Margaret he bought

from the same flower girl. Which means that the flower girl whose always accurate must have the help of a fairy whose doing all this after-care.”

“So the fairy plotted this situation just like the game where you would fall in love with me?”

“It’s quite a forceful approach.”

Either way the prank toward Hugh doesn’t look like they were to help his love. In his case where however many times he does the game, the fairy might have been fooling around so that the love never blossoms.

But then why would it need to do that sort of thing to Hugh.

“Oh no. That means I should have protected you from the danger by getting injured? Then you could have fallen for me.” Lydia was being serious but Edgar was being optimistic.

“I would never fall for you!”

“Anyways, could you sit down right over there.”

Why? But then she noticed that the shoe Edgar picked up was hers. She realized that one of them must have slipped off when she tripped.

After having Lydia sit down on one of the stone steps of the building, he knelt down in front of her.

“Did you get cut by a rock? There’s blood.”

“Uh, it’s nothing.”

Paying no heed, he took her ankle into his palm and wrapped a handkerchief around the cut.

As she had him slip on the shoe she gazed at the golden eyelashes that were facing down, and she couldn’t help for her heart to start beating faster.

If he just wouldn’t say anything to tease others, and if he wasn’t a rake and woman chaser, she could honestly have thought him as attractive.

But then again, that wouldn’t be Edgar.

“This is like one of the scenes of Cinderella. The moment they find the owner of the shoe that was found.”

Yes, Edgar was someone who would say something like this at any opportunity.

“You are the one, the princess I’ve been looking for.”

“...Please stop with the silly acting.”

“You’re not going to play along.”

You expect me to call you prince?

That kind of embarrassing play was impossible for Lydia.

It was a weird feeling, being gazed up by him who was kneeling down before her and chuckled to her reaction.

It was as if she really was a princess. The one he was looking at wasn’t her usual self, but felt as if it was a special girl under magic.

But his sweet words were not from his heart. If she were to succumb to it, it was obvious that she would end up in some unimaginable state.

“There was no glass slipper or pumpkin carriage for the opera Cinderella,” said Lydia, somehow managing to fight off the giddy feeling.

The prince in the opera didn’t look for the girl he fell in love with a slipper, but one of the matching pairs of a bracelet.

That was a promise that came out on stage, that he would surely find Cinderella, no matter who she was, or what she looked like.

It was the true, loyal love between two people that didn’t use the power of magic, something that achieved the destined love of the Cinderella story.

“It’s bad to be under the influence of magic. Wouldn’t you agree? I wouldn’t want my love to be toyed around by a fairy who’s playing pranks.” Her voice ended up being strong because she didn’t want to be swallowed up by the air around the two of them.

“Yes, I can’t look away when Hugh’s love is being interrupted by a fairy too.” I’m a Fairy Doctor. It’s my job to help those who are in trouble because of fairies.

“So you’re going to ignore about us right now?”

“More important, we need to find that fairy and capture it...”

But fairies are so fast, they wouldn’t be easy to capture.

When it comes to fairies, Lydia’s mind tended to be occupied with only that and she had already forgotten about the sweet air that was between them and was engrossed in deep thought.

Edgar decided to give and stood up, then looked up as if he spotted something.

“Hey, here comes Nico.”

A gray colored cat was walking on his two back legs along the top of the brick

wall. Usually when in open sight, he would pretend to be a regular domestic cat, but this happy gray feline must have been in the company of spirits, stopped in his tracks as he noticed the two of them and sat down on the wall and craftingly crossed his legs.

“You’re cat sure is different.”

Even though he witnessed Nico walking on two feet he still just thought of him as a cat that plays tricks.

“Hey Lydia, isn’t it a beautiful moonlit night.”

It must have only sounded like a cat meowing to Edgar, but Lydia breathed a heavy sigh at Nico for periodically forgetting to act like a cat.

He must have been drinking with his fairy friends at some pub, but if it was realized that he was a talking cat and cause a commotion, she worried that he might end up being sold off to circus.

Nico loved to drink and usually took caution in his appearances to look like a gentleman, but right now he only resembled an old man as he yawned and straightened his necktie.

Although Lydia wanted to discuss a few new matters, she changed her mind since she couldn’t waste time dealing with a drunk.

“Edgar, let’s go.”

“What about him? Don’t you need to take him home as well?”

“He’ll manage on his own.”

“Hey Lydia, I just remembered that earlier this morning I spotted someone entering the Earl’s mansion. It was definitely a pixie.”

Lydia stopped dead in her tracks.

“Pixie?”

“Yup. According to the story of the hobgoblin at the pub, that fairy is in love with a flower girl. When a man who buys a flower from her and tries to woo her, it tries and sticks that man with another woman.”

That means, Edgar really did flirt with her. Lydia flashed a glance at him.

If that was why Lydia ended up being the target then it was all because of Edgar.

“It sticks onto a Margaret, and apparently does other nasty things too. It was

with the flower girl over there just earlier, but it messed around with the girl's flower she was using and changed her result by pulling out the petals."

"That one! Where did you see that fairy?"

Lydia rushed off in the direction Nico pointed. And Edgar was right behind her.

"Lydia, where are you going?"

"To find that pixie. It was that fairy who was messing around with the results of everyone's flower game. Yours and Hugh's."

"If only you would spend half of the spirit you have for your work for me."

Lydia wasn't paying attention since she was in a hurry.

"There it is." They stopped in the alleyway leading out to the main street.

The customers that came out of the opera house had already left the area and so the place was nearly deserted so they had no trouble spotting the girl who was sitting down on the foundation of the colonnade.

The flower girl had her basket of Margarets placed beside her, and it seemed she was playing the flower game as there was a small pile of white petals scattered around her feet.

The pixie was sitting on top of the girl's lap.

Obviously she didn't see the creature.

The fairy arbitrarily plucked out a petal from the flower in her hand, and when the girl got to the last petal she breathed a sigh.

"That's the girl who the popular flower game girl, right?"

"Yes. Is there a fairy with her flower?"

"There is. It has feelings for her so it messes around with the results of the flower game for itself. But what I don't know is why it would fool around with Hugh's game and make the results come out as bad."

"Wouldn't that be because he's wishing for mutual love between him and the flower girl."

"Eh? But then the girl that he's in love with is..."

"I think it's her."

"Re-really? But he said he didn't see her face. And why would you know that."

"She had on the same red ribbon that came into the hands of Hugh. I saw her hair tied up into two ponytails when her hat flew off from the wind, but one of

her tails didn't have a ribbon tied on. That's why I knew right away that she was Hugh's love when we were shown the ribbon at the opera house."

"Then why didn't you say anything about the ribbon to Hugh!"

"It's much more fun to watch others in a lost to look for each other."

...This man is unbelievable.

"I'm just kidding."

"It sounded like honesty to me."

Edgar hunched up his shoulders in a 'really?' tone.

"No matter what, I figured that Hugh already knew it was her. He's a singer you know. Even if he didn't remember the face, wouldn't he remember her voice? And remember he said that however many times he did the game it came out as love not. If it says he was dumped then doesn't that mean he has playing the game with only one person in mind?"

"Then why doesn't he introduce himself?"

"He's afraid of her reaction. He seems to be aware that he doesn't give a good impression to ladies, and the game always came out not in his favor, and so he has no courage."

"I see..... Either way, since she looks so distressed while doing the game, that must mean she must have someone she's thinking about as well."

"It could be Hugh you know."

Surprised to hear an idea she would have never imagined, Lydia looked up at Edgar.

But now that she thought about it, it wouldn't be difficult to not fall in love with the one who helps a girl from a drunk without hesitating for their own safety.

"So there's a chance that the two of them could be deeply in love with each other? Oh, but she doesn't know who in the world Hugh not seeing his face."

"It's just a speculation if they love each other, but I think that since he comes to buy flowers from her so often, she might have already figured it out that the man who helped her was actually Hugh. Because remember there was a wound on his hand made from that incident. It's the wound that she wrapped her ribbon around, so she could have speculated the possibility already."

"Since she's not coming out to him even though she's noticed, then she must

have been frightened as well.”

If she didn't have feelings for him at all, wouldn't you want to make sure who it was who rescued you and say your thanks?

“The fact that she only ties on the one remaining red ribbon but hides it with her hat does seem like she wants him to realize it's her but she's too afraid.”

If that's true, then if only one of them would take the first step then their love might be united.

I see! Both of them are being interfered with the fairy and only don't have enough confidence. Then as a Fairy Doctor Lydia must do something about this situation.

“No matter what, I have to stop that fairy from making any more trouble.”

Lydia stepped out into the street and approached the flower girl. The pixie disappeared in a flash again but she didn't bother and cautioned the girl.

“Excuse me. You really shouldn't believe the results of that game. A fairy's playing tricks with it.”

“Fairy?” The girl eyed suspiciously to Lydia.

“Uh, you know how you always get the same result no matter how many times you repeat it? Don't you think that's strange?”

“....Who are you?”

“I'm a Fairy Doctor. I'm here to tell you that you're being followed around by a pixie fairy. It looks like the fairy cares for you but at this rate whoever you fall in love with the fairy will come in between you two and tear you apart.”

“Fairy Doctor?”

“She's a specialist in fairies. She can see them and knows how to handle them too,” spoke up Edgar from behind.

“Ah, the sir from that morning.... Oh yeah, I forgot to hand you your change.”

“That's alright Sara. Thanks to your flower fortune game I was able to spend a wonderful day with her.”

The flower girl, whose name was apparently Sara, looked at Lydia curiously.

“Oh I see, she's quite the beauty but her head's hollow. Then it must be a lot of trouble for you Sir to try to tell her your feelings.”

“Hey, I am not at all stupid! I just came to talk to you to help you. If it’s a pixie then there’s no trouble trying to scare it away. All you have to do is give it something that belongs to you.”

But the girl only stood up angrily. “Are you trying to mess with me?”

“I’m not, it’s the truth.”

“Even so, it’s none of your business. If there’s a fairy that’s looking after me, then it’s trying to tell me with through the game that I should give up, right? If I have to give it up anyway, then it’s better that the results always tell me so.”

“Wait, so you’re not going to find out his feelings and give up?” shouted Lydia grabbing onto Sara’s flower basket to not let her go.

“I said it’s none of your business. I’m planning to quit selling flowers and go back home in the countryside anyway.”

“Oh so you’re really giving up. Then it would be alright if I asked you out?”

“Edgar, what are you saying at a time like this!”

“Sir, didn’t you prefer this fairy something lady?”

“Yes I do. But she’s never returned my feelings. If you’ll be with me then she might become jealous.”

“I will never be jealous!”

“So I’m a Stalking-horse,” mumbled Sara.

But Edgar didn’t stop, he lived up to his flirting character. “Sara, wouldn’t you like to dress up and go to the opera house and show him what a great a catch he missed.”

Eh.... What is this man thinking?

“Are you going to show her off in front of Mr. Hogart? That would only make things worse.”

“Oh, jealous already?”

“I am not!”

“Hugh already thinks that he won’t get his love. Then it shouldn’t be a problem.”

“You know that’s because of the fairy. And what help are you doing be draining away his confidence even more.”

To make matters worse he was a man without any confidence. If he were to

find out that the girl Edgar brought along was his love interest, then that could shatter him without a doubt.

“Hugh has no confidence not because of the fairy or me.”

He’s always ready to come up with something to talk back.

“The Opera House? So I can go inside?” asked Sara eagerly.

“Of course,” replied Edgar turning back to her with a smile.

“Then I wouldn’t mind going with you.”

“Then it’s decided.”

Unbelievable! This is no longer about the problem of trying to stop the prank of a fairy.

This man is even more dangerous than the fairy.

Most likely Sara wanted to see Hugh’s performance just once.

And he jumps to take an opportunity in that. Lydia held her shaking head in indignation.



It was just around the time when the night was soaking in; Sara was standing under a street lamp watching a shadow come out from the back door of the Opera house.

“Young lady, do you have any flowers left?”

Feeling her heart speed up to the usual voice, she turned around.

“Yeah I do,” and she handed out a Margaret, which was accepted by a hard-faced man no where near matching to have an elegant white flower.

But he was cute when he smiled and his voice was soft and kind.

The two of them only exchanged words of thanks and goodnight. But for tonight Sara took the plunge and asked a question.

“Is that flower, for your lover?”

“No, it’s nothing like that. I live by myself so I thought of taking a flower by with me.”

“Oh,...I see.”

After that Sara didn’t know what to do, and even he spoke no more. She regretted asking such a thing and was about to take off.

“Well, goodnight...”

“You really don’t take off your hat, even at night.”

It was so sudden. Sara wondered for an instance if he wondered if there was a red ribbon under this hat.

But there is no way. If so, it would be normal to just ask.

He hadn’t noticed about Sara, and that she was the girl from that time, so there was nothing to worry about.

Because he must have the company of finely dressed ladies every day.

“My, my hair, I didn’t fix it.”

“.....Sorry, it was weird of me to ask.”

“It’s nothing, I’m not bothered.”

“...Well then,”

Goodnight. He said awkwardly and quickly walked off.

Sara took a deep breath.

It won’t matter since she won’t see him anymore. In time she’d forget about him.

She looked up to the impressive building and repeated to herself that as long as she could see him singing on stage, then that would be the best happiness she could hope for.



It was sad to think that even though they thought for each other they have to keep it in their hearts and give up.

Lydia thought to herself that she couldn’t stay silent and watch as everything was messed around just for the whim of Edgar.

But then, what would make Hugh Hogarts not be deceived by what Edgar plans to do and make him want to tell his feelings to Sara.

Sara may also have feelings for Hugh, is only a speculation of Edgars, and Lydia doesn’t have any relationship with him to be able to say something so rash.

At least if Hugh didn’t believe in the game that was being played by the fairy and could build his confidence.

After much thought, Lydia decided to go and visit Hugh the next day.

Hugh came out in between his practices to meet Lydia, and she told him that there was a fairy that is on the flowers of the flower girl and that the fairy was

the one playing with the game to make only the bad results end up as the last petal.

Being told about fairies again, he was her a suspicious look, but remembering that she was in the company of the Duchess, he must of thought he couldn't say anything rude to her and made the effort to listen to her story.

If she were to seriously try to give advice about fairies, people would think of her as a freak.

But Lydia was used to that.

Whatever they thought of her, if it was necessary she would still tell them.

"So my lady, what do you propose I do?"

"I believe that you're being too quick to decide that your love will never prosper. If you wouldn't rely on the flower game..., no, if you are so worried about the flower game, then please try doing it with a different flower. If it's a flower without the fairy with it, then there shouldn't be bad results that come with it."

"A different flower? So you're saying to not use a flower that was bought from that flower girl?"

"That's right. I have one right here."

Lydia took out a Margaret that she bought earlier from a different flower girl. There was no mistake that the pixie was no where in sight.

He took the flower silently, and plucked out one petal, and started to chant love me, love me not.

When he said 'loves me' along with the last petal, Lydiatook a deep sigh of relief.

"See, you shouldn't be determined by the pranks of a fairy."

But he didn't change his glum expression.

"Do you know, my lady, that apparently most Margaret flowers have an odd number of petals. If you start with 'loves me' then most of the time it ends with same 'loves me.'"

Eh?! Lydia was shocked and rushed to count with her fingers.

Sure enough, if the numbers of petals were an odd number then it would be 'loves me not' when you start with 'loves me.'

If you were to test your fortune to see if they loved you or not, then most everyone were sure to start with 'loves me.'

"That's why I always start with 'loves me not'... It isn't the fairy's fault that it comes out not in my favor. It could be that I just haven't come across an odd numbered Margaret, and I've been selfishly thinking that it may somehow bring me luck just like a four-leafed clover."

Lydia realized that Hugh was rather relieved that the game's results always came out bad.

Being in the daily life of battling for a part as a singer would give no one time for love. On top of that it was unimaginable for him, as a man who was feared at first glance by women, to be the one to tell his feelings first.

The flower game's bad results distanced him from the agony of worrying about how he would tell his feelings or if he would be refused.

She wondered if the fairy's pranks harden his negative feelings even more.

Even though he probably could have already used an even numbered Margaret.

"But even when you finally found an even numbered Margaret but she's already gone, then wouldn't be lucky at all..."

"Gone?"

"Ah, nothing.... I meant in case."

Once Lydia became silent because there was nothing else she could say, Hugh excused himself since he was in the middle of practice.

"Miss Carlton, is there anything wrong?"

When she was standing by herself, the Duchess called out to her from the window of her carriage.

"I happened to spot Hugh and you from the main street."

With invitation, Lydia climbed onto the carriage of the Duchess, and told her about the fairy being in love with Hugh's love and interfering with them.

And yet he still thinks that he would never catch his love. He's become negative so much that he's purposefully making bad results because of there being odd numbers in the flowers of a Margaret.

She breathed a heavy sigh as she spew it all out. The Duchess smiled kindly to her.

“One’s opportunity isn’t from a game or fairy or the words of others. In the end people can only act upon what they decide on.”

“Then, do you believe that he’ll end up giving up till it’s too late.”

The Duchess looked out to the far skies.

“Do you remember about how I told you I chose my marriage on a flower game? The result that came out because of the fairy’s prank always came out as the other man, the soldier.”

“Eh..., is, is that true? Then why did you end up marrying the Duke?”

“I came to figure it out as I was playing the game. That I was hoping for the result to be my husband.”

One’s true feelings couldn’t be changed from your fortune told or by a fairy.

Then what is there that I can do. Does this mean I can’t do anything more. There’s no doubt that a fairy’s the one that butting in.

“I heard you say that the duty of a Fairy Doctor is to help those in trouble with fairies. Then Miss Carlton, there’s nothing for you to feel bad about, even if you couldn’t solve a couple’s quarrel. You just need to watch over them.”

“Watch over...?”

The old noblewoman chuckled softly.

“Hugh has another part to perform the day after tomorrow. Would you care to accompany me?”

Lydia didn’t have the experience to refuse an offer of invitation from a Duchess. Besides that day was surely when Edgar was going to take Sara to the Opera house.

At the very least I could keep my eye out on Edgar and the fairy, those who dare to interfere with a couple’ love. So that the fairy doesn’t interfere with Hugh’s performance and so Sara doesn’t fall victim to Edgar.

“Thank you, I would be delighted,” replied Lydia, brimmed with determination.

On the day of the performance, Lydia asked the Duchess to hand a hawthorn seed as a charm to ward off fairies to Hugh.

Apparently the Duchess told him that it was a lucky charm for him on stage and to make sure to keep it with him until the stage was over, so the fairy shouldn’t be able to harm him.

Not having to worry about that, Lydia turned her eyes to the box seats that were on each side of the theater.

She didn't see Edgar yet but the seats were nearly full.

"If it's about the Count, then you don't have to worry."

"Eh" jumped Lydia turning to face the Duchess.

Lydia took it into consideration and decided it was best to hide the discrediting rakish character of Edgar and so she hadn't revealed about how he had invited Hugh's secret love.

Yet it was as if the Duchess was aware of everything.

"I was asked by him to invite you to today's opera."

"By Edgar? But, but, he's...."

"He's bringing the girl who Hugh is in love with? If you think of the Count as a frivolous woman chaser, then he said he wants you to have a better opinion of him."

But it's an unchangeable fact that he's a frivolous rake.

"He says he wants me to look up to him, but how could one give him good marks when he's flirting with the woman Mr. Hogart cares for? Whenever Edgar sees an attractive woman he needs to dress her up and escort her around," said Lydia sourly.

"Was bringing you along also his amusement?" chuckled the Duchess.

"I, I may not be cute, but it must be because I just happen to be conveniently in his reach."

"I don't know about that. If you weren't around I think he would flirt with her whether she was Hugh's love or not."

In the box seat that she turned her eyes to, there was a familiar blond hair young man who appeared.

Edgar was wearing a gray evening coat flawlessly and was easy to spot even in a place like this that was filled with people. Naturally one's eye went to the woman by his side.

Sara was wearing a red dress; it didn't hide her vivacious nature, yet showed off her grace and charm.

One could expect as much from Edgar who was always confident that he could

make his escort become the greatest lady; no one in this crowd could imagine that Sara was a flower girl from the lower district.

Watching them from afar, she could tell that people's eyes were focusing on Sara.

Lydia was amazed at herself for being able to stand to be by Edgar's side up until now. But at the same time, she did feel envious of Sara.

It wasn't anything like jealousy though.

"Look, do you see how her hair is?"

Directed by the Duchess, she focused her eyes to see that a red ribbon was decorating Sara's glossy black hair. That was the only accessory for her hair and it felt like it was a little on the plainer side, but that rather drew more attention.

It was the ribbon that she didn't want Hugh's eyes to see by hiding it from him under her hat. Edgar must have smartly convinced her and had her put the ribbon on, but Lydia thought that that wasn't enough to make her rethink that he was doing it for the sake of Sara and Hugh.

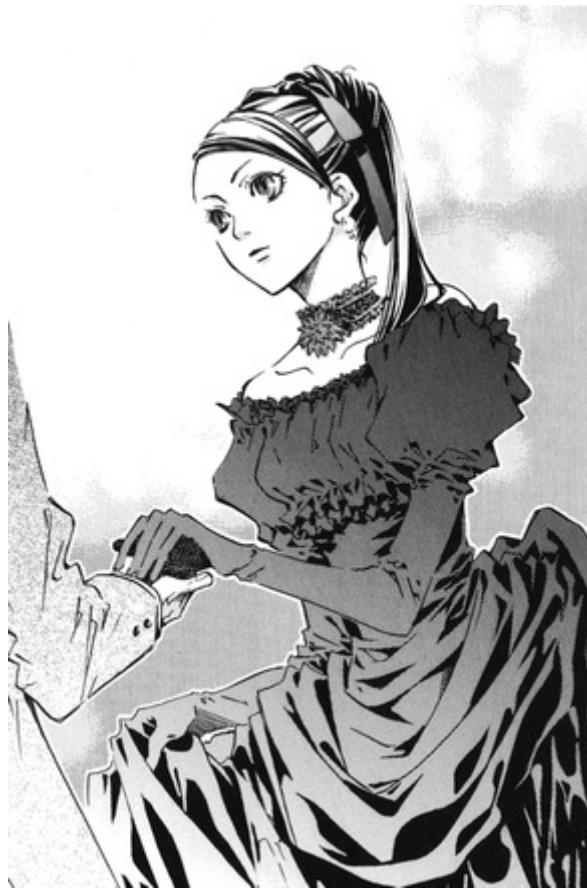
Hugh might notice her red ribbon but would that make him more positive towards this love.

He was so determined to keep his feelings away from her.

"Now Miss Carlton, let's wait and hear the song for the destined lovers."

Paying no heed to Lydia's worry, the opera 'La Cenerentola' began.

Forced to work as a maid by her two older sisters, Cinderella happened to meet and a prince and fell in love.



But she wasn't aware that he was the prince and thought of him as a regular servant.

Lydia recalled that when Sara and Hugh met, they also didn't know anything about each other.

This story reminded her of the two's situation.

Eventually, Hugh made his appearance for his part in the chorus.

There were no pranks made by the fairy today, so the play went along smoothly.

Hugh also looked like he was performing well and sang joyfully.

Sara gazed at him intently. Hugh must have noticed as well. He kept on glancing over to the direction of where she sat in the box seat.

The scene switched to the royal court.

Cinderella made her appearance beautifully dressed. The two sisters couldn't have imagined that it was their younger sister.

The fake prince prevented Cinderella from leaving, but then Cinderella revealed that she was in love in the servant. Then the servant that appeared in front of them was of course the real prince. She removed one of her bracelets, one of an exact pair.

Please look for the real me that has the same bracelet as this. If you still say that

you love me, then I will gladly become yours.

Listening to that song, Edgar whispered something into Sara's ear.

Sara softly reached up to her red ribbon.

That ribbon was the same as Cinderella's bracelet. The same as the glass slipper.

It was the string of destiny that would bring together the two who didn't know anything about each other, a silent wish that they wished to be found by the other.

At the same time that Lydia realized, Sara too, and Hugh must have noticed.

The singing voice that filled the theater was the aria of prince's resolve to find her.

"I promise to find you"

For just an instance, it looked as if Sara and Hugh exchanged glances. I wonder if they were able to sense each other's feelings.

I hope they do. But Lydia also began to realize what it was Edgar was thinking.

He had succeeded in dragging the two of them into the story of Cinderella. Sympathizing with the echo of the heart touching song, the two of them became Cinderella and the Prince.

In that moment there was another love story that was born.

But, just at the finale, Sara suddenly stood up. She whispered that she's leaving and took off from the box seat.

Edgar ran after her.

"What's the matter? If you're not at the seat, then the prince can't come for you."

Sara turned around to face him with a questioning expression, but she took off again. "It doesn't matter." She left the theater not listening to his words to stay.

He continued his pursuit and cut her off just as she had crossed the main street.

"Are you worried that he might not come to see you? But I would think that he would be hurt if you weren't there."

"Sir, even you don't want to be hurt or don't want to worry anymore, so you can only be lighthearted and be vague about your lady."

".....Vague? I'm always speaking my true feelings."

"I can't believe that you're really trying when you're compliment me in the same joking tone."

"We aren't talking about me right now. This is about you."

"I'm just saying you're not convincing."

"You sure are hard-headed."

"So what, would you step aside."

"No. All my efforts to have her think of me as a good man will be a waste."

"I don't care."

"Edgar!" It was Lydia's screaming voice that called out to him just then.

Lydia became worried after the two of them left their seats and came outside to look for them, but found the Pixie who was sneaking up after them.

She decided to follow it so that it wouldn't do anything nasty, but when the fairy went up to a carriage that was parked on the main street, she saw it untying the harness of the horses.

In its path, there was Edgar and Sara.

When the Pixie gave a strong whip of the horse's lead, Lydia called out to them but it was too late. The spooked horse went out of control.

"Edgar, watch out!" without thinking Lydia jumped out into the street.

She tried to run over to him, but then the horse that was carrying the Pixie changed its course and started to head over to her direction.

Oh no. That fairy had been trying to keep Edgar away from Sara by causing trouble to Lydia all this time.

It must be thinking that even now, if Lydia were to be in trouble then Edgar would have no time to be flirting with Sara. From the beginning, the Pixie knew that Lydia would come after them.....

What a stupid Pixie. This wouldn't cause any damage towards Edgar at all. How depressing. I'm supposed to be a Fairy Doctor but I'm so stupid, I couldn't follow through with what I did.

But this is my own fault.

So many things raced by in her mind in a fraction of a second. Her feet couldn't move as she watched as the horse approached her in slow motion.

But someone grabbed onto her shoulder.

She was pulled aside in the person's arms and pushed up against a streetlamp post.

Immediately the sound of the horse galloping by was heard, and even when the sound died off, Lydia couldn't seem to grasp what had happened to herself for a while.

"We're safe now."

Hearing the voice by her ear, she finally realized that Edgar had been the one who saved her.

She was holding on to his arm and thought that she needs to let go but Edgar held onto her shoulder as if to calm her down, so she stayed in place.

Usually Lydia would take caution and tense up whenever he approached her, but for some reason right now it was simply calming to be up against him.

She must be out of her mind for thinking to stay like this for just a little bit longer.

She needed to think to herself that it was because her legs were shaking and she couldn't stand up by herself.

"....I was the only one in danger."

"But, because you called out to caution me, I was able to reach you in time."

"That was. I wasn't really thinking..."

Realizing that Sara had come up to them, Lydia lifted up her head, still in his arms.

Sara faced Edgar and said "I take back my words, Sir. You may talk like your joking but you really do care for her. And she knows that too."

It's nothing like that. This is just coincidence. Her heart was throbbing and she felt so embarrassed but she managed to pull strength back into her legs and pull away from Edgar.

"Then, does my words of caution sound convincing?"

Sara tilted her head to the side, looking worried. "....I envy how you can just run out to her like that before you can think." And she smiled.

"When I was tormented by the drunk and he saved me, I was so scared and could only cower in the shadows and could do nothing as he was endlessly beaten. That's why I thought I had no right to wish for me to look for me.... But

then it would be sly of me to keep running. Even if he did or didn't look for me..."

The curtain call must have ended, as there was a gush of people that had spilled out into the main street before the opera house.

Sara untied the red ribbon from her hair, and handed it to Lydia.

"Can I ask you to take care of the fairy? You said that all I need is one of my possessions, right?"

"You'll believe in fairies?"

Sara gently nodded her head.

"I haven't seen it, but whenever I'm out working and feeling sad, I always had a feeling that something was by my side. When I was pointed that out by you, I thought so and was a little happy, but surprised that I actually did believe it... But if it really does exist, then I do thank it, and want to tell it that I'm alright now and wish that it will return to its home."

When Lydia accepted the ribbon, Sara walked towards the opera house as if she had the resolve to finally meet Hugh.

Just then, a voice sang out from somewhere.

It was the song that they just heard at the theater.

"It's the prince's aria 'I promise to find you.' "

It was Hugh's voice. But the aria that was meant for Cinderella was being sung for Sara and glided across the night sky.

It was sung with all one's might, sending his feelings across the crowd, to reach out to his lost Sara.

As if being drawn, Sara ran to it.

"It was a brilliant love message. I hate to admit, but I would never be able to do the same," smiled Edgar happily.

"He is a great prince." Lydia also smiled, listened to the singing.

Eventually the singing ended, meaning that he must have found Sara.

For now they surely wouldn't need any words.

And they won't rely on the flower game.

"Well, we should head home. It'll be crude for us to go to the curtain call for this finale, right?"

“Yes” Lydia agreed to that.

“By the way Lydia, do you think of me as a better man?”

“How in the world would you impress me when you were completely dumped by Sara?”

The reason that her tone was filled with sarcasm must be because she wanted to forget about the embarrassment of depending on him just now.

“Then would you comfort me wit.”

But it was always Edgar for being the one that doesn't mind Lydia's refusals.

You don't look wounded at all. Lydia thought, but in actuality she did hold him in respect just a bit.

As a Fairy Doctor, Lydia could understand fairies, but because she didn't have any relationships with people, she was fairly inexperienced with love.

She had thought that to simply drive away the fairy and its pranks would solve everything.

But something like that wouldn't budge the feelings of a person and she credited Edgar who knew that.

She reconsidered that his gift of flirting women does actually come in handy for others and thought of his frivolity as just one of his little characteristics.

“How do you want me to comfort you?”

“Let's kiss.”



Just as usual he ends up just playing around with Lydia's reaction. But. Oh, well.

"Oh yeah. I still had work to do," remembered Lydia stopping with the ribbon in her hand. And she moved her head around in search.

"Pixie, you're here aren't you? I have a present for you from Sara."

A small red haired creature appeared on a tree near the streetlamp. Even when Lydia approached it, the fairy didn't try to escape.

It tilted its head slightly sad, and after accepting Sara's red ribbon, it disappeared.

"Is it finished?"

"Yes, that fairy will no longer cause any more trouble with the flower games."

"Then let's hold hands."

"Huh, what are you talking about?"

"About how you would comfort me."

I thought that topic was over?

Paying no heed, Edgar took Lydia's hand into his and started to take a walk.

Oh well, thought Lydia who was already starting to be soft on Edgar.

She had forgotten all about how he was a man who would take advantage of any opportunity if she would go easy on him.



The next day, when Lydia went to work at the Ashenbert house, immediately Edgar came into her office.

"Lydia, let's go to the boat race at Thames river," he said so optimistic as usual.

"Edgar, how many times do I have to say that I'm here to do work?"

"People need breaks every now and then you know."

".....Will you let me work for once!" Lydia suddenly was overwhelmed with melancholy. But that was nothing to make Edgar stop there.

"Then do you want to try a game with a flower?"

"Again? There are no more magical flowers."

"Even better then, we can decide equally." He pulled out a Margaret from a vase that was set in the room.

"For you to go along with me for a whole day today. Or for me to listen you whatever you say. Which do you want?" asked Edgar, smiling devilishly and awfully confident somehow.

With a startle, Lydia remembered. Hugh had said that most of the petals of a Margaret have an odd number. Does Edgar know about that as well?

"All right, but I'll be the one to do it!"

Surprisingly Edgar said 'Go ahead' without a struggle and handed the Margaret to her.

Lydia cautiously started from 'Do as I say.'

But the last petal was,

"Do as you say?"

Eh? Why is it even-numbered?

"Edgar you tampered with this flower!"

"I haven't done anything."

"Couldn't you have pluck out one petal before you handed it to me?"

"Then do you want to try it again?"

Lydia exited the room and chose a Margaret from a flower vase that was set on the table in the hallway.

And she did the game again, but the result was still the same.

In desperation, she kept on trying with one flower after another in a different

room. For some reason, every single one of them had an even-number of petals.

“Lydia, it’s useless however many times you do it. You have to do as I say. As promised,” chuckled Edgar standing in front of Lydia, blocking her as she was running round to different rooms.

“This is strange. There isn’t a fairy anymore, but the number of petals are all even-numbered.”

“Are you referring to how most Margarets have an odd-number of petals? I heard that Hugh told you that. The Duchess told me. I was aware that there was such a rumor, but you shouldn’t swallow everything. When all were counted, there was the same number of evens and odds.”

Counted?

“Good god, then all the Margarets in the house...”

“All of them are even-numbered, so it’ll be the same however many times you do the game.”

Most likely all the servants in the house were made to count them since morning.

I can’t imagine what he’s thinking.

“Margarets are a fair flower. That’s why the game’s also fair. So then Lydia, let’s go.”

“You’re the most unfair!” shouted Lydia. But it was no doubt that another day of Lydia was going to be spent away by Edgar.

Short Story: Wait for a Moonlit Night to Elope

Even if we are from different social classes, even if we're opposed by those around us, once we've met, there is no one who can pull us apart from our love for each other.

Let's get married, he said to her.

She simply nodded.

The two of them departed to a foreign land so that they could quietly hold their wedding.

Only the round moon was the one to see off the two of them as they rode in the horse drawn carriage.

"May I ask what you're thoughts are, Earl Ashenbert? My daughter is completely head-over-heals with a popularized novel like this, and seems to be planning to elope and from all the men she could have chosen, she wants to go with that low life."

The man who was speaking was named Mr. Browser, and he slightly tucked in his rounded belly from nervousness craving for favor from the young Earl before him.

In a small palace salon that was furnished with plush furniture and marvelous collection pieces, the Earl took the book from Browser's hand and flipped his eyes through the pages. Eventually, he ran his fingers through his picturesque blond hair and said:

"So you're saying that this man is instigating an elopement with your daughter?"

The young man before Browser possessed a polished way he held himself with a tender smile on his lips and the physical attractiveness that could charm any man or woman. And because of that, he had his share of female relationships and Browser heard of the rumors that erupted here and there, but he wasn't going to be bothered with that right now and so paid a visit to the Earl's estate.

Since this wasn't a case that could be solved with just any ordinary man.

"I hear that there are an increasing number of scam-artists that approach upper class women with the aim to marry them. Even if it was an elopement, if the marriage was legalized, there is nothing a parent can do. There is no mistake that this man is targeting my daughter because he is after our money."

The Browsers was a family who were landowners in the countryside. They were not peerage but were in the upper class.

Naturally, they had the expectation that their daughter's marriage partner was going to be an educated gentleman from a good household.

"So what kind of help could I offer?" asked the handsome earl, as he seemed to be curious, flipping through more pages of the book.

The Earl lifted up the corner of his mouth as he spoke, which made Browser curious as to what part of his story could have interested the man, but he switched his focus as he wanted to hurry up and spill out the truth while the earl still seemed interested with his daughter's case.

"My lord, would you please meet with my daughter. My daughter Norma hasn't had that much of a chance to speak with young men in her life, and because of that, she doesn't know what the behavior is of a respectable gentleman and thinks that this imposter is a kind man. Furthermore, she's been so influenced by that popular novel and ended up believing that love in different social classes is the most beautiful thing and eloping is the romantic thing to do. Even when I had her meet a few male acquaintances of mine, she has been completely indifferent. But if it was you....."

"So are you saying that you'll allow me to court for your daughter's affections?"

The earl spoke in a very jokingly tone but if Browser was able to gain a relationship with a peer through his daughter's marriage, then it would be a dream come true for him.

"Why, yes of course, she may not be of any good looks, but if you take a liking to her, we can provide a handsome dowry...."

As Browser spoke, he became worried if he had rushed into that part too fast. He didn't want to give the impression that he was trying to push for a marriage arrangement by pretending to come for help.

But if all went well, then it was killing two birds with one stone.

Browser looked up to see if he could tell what the earl was thinking.

But the earl only had a faint smile on his lips and Browser couldn't determine if he was interested in his daughter or not.



“Lydia, what are you reading?”

To the unexpected voice, Lydia slammed her book shut.

She hadn't realized that someone had entered the room; the man who was standing by her side was the lord of this estate, Edgar Ashenbert.

Lydia, who was a Fairy Doctor, was a girl hired by this man who had just recently attained the title of the Earl of Ibrazel (the fairy world.)

It had only been a few months since she had come out of the countryside in Scotland, and was now hired to help Edgar, who was completely clueless when it came to fairies, by racking her brain on how the fairies who lived on his lands could coexist with humans in peace.

But putting that aside, Lydia constantly kept her guard up around Edgar who was standing smiling pleasantly at her and then hid the book from his sight by hiding it behind her.

“It's nothing,” she said.

But the book was immediately taken away from her with one swift movement of his hand.

“A romance novel? Oh, so you read these kinds of books.”

“It isn't mine. Someone dropped it here. I think one of the maids might have forgotten it.”

It was thought, nowadays, that it was improper for unmarried young women to be interested in the opposite sex. Lydia was aware that adults who had good common sense would frown at such things like this currently popular romance novel.

But she also knew that it was very popular amongst young women.

Although she heard about it, because she spent more time with fairies than with people, she never had an opportunity to read the book.

That's why she felt that it was even more improper to read it openly in front of

others.

“Is it interesting?”

“Huh? I-I don’t know. I flipped it open just now. Oh, someone might be looking for it, so I should hand it to Mr. Tomkins.”

Lydia got it back from Edgar and tried to leave the room.

“Aren’t you curious? About if the two of them in were successful in their runaway?”

She stopped in her tracks.

Of course I’m curious. I just got to the scene when they strengthened their resolve and promised to elope.

She was so engrossed in the story that she didn’t even notice that Edgar had entered the room.

But why did he know the plot of this book?

“Isn’t eloping dramatic? Even if they’re opposed by everyone around them, don’t you think it means that they lived up to their love? It proves how strong their bond was to each other.”

He wore a finely tailored flock coat with a silk necktie pinned down with a sparkling yellow crystal. That man narrowed his ash mauve eyes and peered over to Lydia with them. A strand of his shining blond hair dangled down onto his forehead.

If an aristocratic with a handsome face like that smiled in front of a woman, even Lydia couldn’t help but for her heartbeat to beat rapidly.

“Wouldn’t you dream of something like this?”

“Huh?”

“It’s really is a lot of work to make an elopement successful. There will be an even more difficult trial awaiting the two of them. If they were to fail....”

“Huh, what happens?”

“If it were me, I’d definitely succeed. Would you like to take a try?”

Edgar had his hands on her shoulders before she had realized it but Lydia snapped back to her senses.

“....You sure know a lot with what goes on in the book, don’t you? So the one who must have left it here...”

"If only you would become a little bit more curious about love; I thought you might understand how wounded my feelings would were."

She gapped at him with her mouth wide open.

"But do try to read the rest of it. Once you know how such a passionate love ends, then you might want to try and elope with me."

"I would never want to elope, and never with you!" Lydia pinched the hand that was on her shoulder with all her strength.

It was normal for Edgar to always treat her like he was playing with her.

He'd treat Lydia like his lover and try to sway her by speaking sweet words to you, but she thought of it as something more like his habit.

It was in his nature to make advances towards women who he met, regardless of who it was. It wasn't as if he seriously thought Lydia as special.

She was fully aware of that, but Lydia couldn't help but be swayed around by what he said.

Like hell he would feel wounded.

Besides, Edgar wasn't a man who was as serious and loyal like the hero in the story.

Lydia yelled out at him to stop joking around with her and pushed him away.

But I'm still a little curious the ending was....

Anyways, today is Sunday. I don't need to commute to work to the earl house, which means it's my day-off, so that I don't have to see Edgar's face.

And yet why do I have to remember what went on between Edgar and I even though I'm here at home.

Lydia stood up to try to shake away the sight his face that filled her head.

She happened to see Nico come in from the window.

Nico was a fairy who had the form of a cat. He jumped down onto the floor and stood up on his hind feet, putting his paw on his hip and looked up at Lydia.

"Hey Lydia, there's a strange trespasser in front of the window."

Nico, who was her friend, pointed with his fluffy gray tail instead of gesturing with his hand.

Beckoned, Lydia looked down to the ground from the window in her room, and saw that the crouching figure leaning against the wall of her house was a pale-

faced man.

But that wasn't what Nico meant as strange. It was the one who was by the man, that figure had long, flowing hair and wore clothing that dragged along the ground; it was a white-colored woman whose body appeared to be transparent and floating in the air.

With fingers that were more colorless than white, she was stroking the crouching man's cheek lovingly.

"...A fairy?"

Even if it was the kind of fairies who couldn't normally be seen by people, they showed up clearly with Lydia's yellowish green eyes.

She leaned over the windowsill to try to get a better look, but the fairy vanished like a cloud.

Lydia rushed out of her room, sprung down the stairs and out the front door, and when she got outside, she approached the man who was crouched down on the side of the street.

It was a young man who was crouched down, looking sick in the face with cold sweat pouring out of him.

"Excuse me, are you all right?"

"Ah, I'm fine. I just felt dizzy all of a sudden," said the man under a groan with his eyes opening just slightly.

He wore a dark red flock coat which seemed a bit on the gaudy side, but maybe because of his kind androgynous face, he didn't give off any indecent impression.

"This house here happens to be my family's, so you could come in to take a rest. Staying here on the stones is awfully cold, isn't it? It won't make you any better."

He still showed a bit of hesitation, but the man eventually nodded and used the wall to steady himself up.

The man's name was Lloyd.

After drinking a sip of the mint tea she offered, that must have calmed him down and he breathed a sigh in relaxation.

"Thank you, you really saved me. I'm so lucky to have been rescued by such a nice young lady."

"Even if it wasn't me, it would be normal to help others in need."

"Here in London, even if someone was extremely sick on the road, people would first be suspicious of such a stranger."

Being reminded that, she realized that she might have been too careless. It was Sunday but her father, who is a scholar in Gemology, was out of the house on his rounds to gather gem stones.

But Mr. Lloyd still looked so tired that he couldn't stand up, and when he smiled, he gave a completely harmless impression and didn't look dangerous at all.

"Haven't you been feeling sick like this for a while now?"

He looked at her curiously.

"Yes, actually I did. How could you guess that?"

The ghostly figure she got a peek at early, that was definitely the cause of his problem.

For now, there was a hobgoblin in this house so no other new fairy could come in.



Lloyd was starting to look better now, probably because he was away from the influence of that fairy.

But if she were to suddenly tell him that he was possessed by a fairy, he would be sure to think she was crazy.

Even now, there were fairies who lived alongside human as their neighbors, but times were coming into the middle of the 19th century, and there were no longer any people who believed in their existence.

But Lydia was a fairy doctor. It was her job to solve problems between humans and fairies, so she could only tell him the truth.

“Your life source is being sucked away by a fairy.” It wasn’t Lydia, but Nico who suddenly spoke out, as he lay on the sofa pretending to be a cat.

As Nico was looked at from Lloyd like he wanted to believe it was his just imagination; Nico sat up straight on the sofa.

Just like a human, Nico smartly crossed his hind legs and proudly leaned back against the backrest and after fixing his necktie with his front paws, he grinned up at Lloyd.

“...A-a cat talked...?”

“I’m not a cat.”

“Uh, Mr. Lloyd, he’s actually a fairy. And uh, so...”

“If you were able to figure out that I was the one talking so quickly, that’s because you’re possessed by the fairy and that puts you halfway into the land of the dead. It means you’re also tied to the fairy realm.”

“What do you mean I’m possessed by a fairy...?” asked the confused Lloyd, but it looked like he had accepted that Nico talked.

“The fairy is a beautiful woman. Mr. Lloyd, does that sound familiar to you?”

He suddenly covered his face with his hands like he just remembered something.

“Now that I think about it..., but that was a dream.... I always see the same dream. There’s a beautiful woman with me, and she would say she loves me....”

“That would definitely be a Leanan sídhe. They are a fairy that becomes the spiritual lover of a human being and slowly drains them of their life force.”

“Then what’s going to happen to me?”

Lydia couldn’t answer right away as she was hesitant if she should tell him that he wouldn’t have that much time left.

Leanan sídhes were said to grant the human who became their lover a godly and inspirational talent in the arts. There could have been a number of renowned artists who had Leanan sídhes as their lovers and even though they met an early death, they left behind many marvelous pieces of art.

Even so, this lover was only a nuisance for men who had no interest in the arts.

“Human, didn’t you accept the Leanan sídhe as your lover?” If you didn’t then the fairy should have moved on and wouldn’t appear before you,” said Nico again.

“Accepted...., but this was in a dream. If a man was approached by a beautiful woman, uh, well, it would be like being consoled when you’re depressed.”

It seemed like he had accepted the proposal of love from the Leanan sídhe. Although one could say it was very difficult for a normal human being to be able to refuse a fairy’s charm.

“Then all that’s left for you is to just live happily ever after with the fairy. Your life will be filled with total bliss, even though it’ll be a short one.”

All the blood drained from the man’s face, and he slumped down with an even more sick face than when they first saw him.

However, it was Lydia’s nature to not pass-by people who were in trouble with fairies.

She may be an amateur, but as long as she called herself a fairy doctor, she must do something about this.

“Uh, Mr. Lloyd, I don’t think there isn’t a way to help you.”

“Hey, Lydia, don’t say anything so reckless,” said Nico in a panic, pulling on Lydia’s sleeve, but that didn’t hinder her.

“I’ll do something about it. You couldn’t tell it by looking, but I happen to be a specialist in fairies.”

“Can you really help me?”

He was in a situation that he couldn’t quite believe himself, right after he was suddenly claimed to be possessed by a fairy, but he certainly did feel like his life

force was being slowly drained.

Most likely he must have wanted any kind of help he could get, no matter how absurd it sounded.

“So you’re able to scare off the fairy?”

The man suddenly clutched her hands, which was a surprise to Lydia.

The only one to do this kind of thing to Lydia was Edgar.

“Ahh, you’re like an angel from heaven.”

She thought that the way he said it like that so naturally made him seem experienced with women just like Edgar, but her impression of him being a little unreliable but kind and friendly wasn’t something that made Lydia feel uncomfortable or nervous, so his behavior actually appearing appealing to her.

“If you would please wait, my lord,” came the panicked voice of the housekeeper. “Uh, if you have business with Miss Carlton, I will notify her, so if you would just wait....”

“That won’t be necessary. You don’t have to be so by-the-book, since I’m on friendly terms with the family here.”

It’s Edgar. Why in the world is he here?

And at the same time, she thought: oh this is bad. If Edgar saw them like this, then Lloyd was sure to be in danger.

Edgar was keeping his eyes out for other bachelors around Lydia, like he had some sort of childish jealousy when they came near her.

To begin with, Edgar had the looks and peerage that would let him have any choice in women. The reason he treats Lydia favorably, even though she wasn’t particularly pretty or was a peer, was to enjoy playing the game of lifting Lydia’s expectations and make her think so, but it was also another game.

Brushing off Lloyd’s hands, Lydia jumped out of the drawing room.

As soon as she stepped out into the hallway, she nearly bumped into Edgar standing there.

“Hello Lydia, I just happened to be in the area, and I wanted to see your face so I paid a visit.” He took off his hat, and just like always he pulled her to him and kissed her hand.

“Edgar, couldn’t you wait till the housekeeper called for me?” said Lydia,

shaking away his hand and shutting the door to the drawing room in a hurry.

“Oh. But don’t I have permission to freely come and go?”

“When and who would allow you.”

“Your father. When I asked a question about gemology, he gave me permission to use the study here anytime. So I came to see you and while I was at it, borrow one of his books.”

Even though her father, who was an university professor and absorbed in his work, thought negatively of how Edgar who half teasingly flirt with his daughter, yet as soon as he was shown the slightest bit of interest in his studies, he would treat him so friendly like one of his students.

Even as he warned Lydia

to watch out for Edgar, he was a fool to give permission for him to enter the house freely.

“Father isn’t here. You knew that yet you came, it isn’t something a gentleman would do.”

“You’re also being careless to let a stranger into the house.” He took a glance at the door that Lydia had just closed.

He’s like a hawk, for crying out loud!

“Mr. Lloyd just happened to be sick and was in sitting in front of the house.”

“Oh I see, so a sick man, would whisper to a girl he’s never met that she’s an angel and hold her hand.”

Eh? You saw that too?

“...But even you do the same thing.”

“....So he really did hold your hand? Well, now I really have to greet him.”

“No wait Edgar!”

But he didn’t listen to Lydia’s protests, and took the liberty of opening the door to the drawing room and entered.

“Uh, Mr. Lloyd. This is Earl Ashenbert,” left with no other option, Lydia had to introduce them.

Lloyd was shocked at such an obliging visitor, but managed to stand up somehow and awkwardly took a bow.

“My lord, it is an honor to meet you.”

“Please stay comfortable as you were. I hear that you weren’t feeling well.” Edgar was smiling harmlessly but Lydia could only think about how his eyes weren’t smiling at all.

“Excuse me, I wasn’t aware that you were going to have a visitor...” murmured Lloyd.

“It’s alright, Mr. Lloyd. The Earl hadn’t made any promise to come,” jumped in Lydia, pitying the panicking Lloyd.

“Goodness, I have it’s a treasure to have such a relationship where you don’t need promises and casually pay a visit,” said Edgar, claiming that he has a special relationship with Lydia.

And then, he approached Lloyd.

“So, how you are feeling?”

Deep behind the perfect smile, the depth of his eyes sharply observed Lloyd.

“Uh, yes. I’m feeling much better. This is all thanks to Miss Carlton. She truly is a wonderful lady.” He smiled to Lydia oblivious to Edgar’s gaze.

Could he be, a little thickheaded? It was apparent that Edgar was irritated.

“Is your residence near? I can offer you my carriage if you like.”

Subliminally telling him to leave, Edgar didn’t wait for Lloyd’s answer and called for his servant.

The brown-skinned young man who immediately appeared, nodded to what his master whispered into his ear and walked up to Lloyd.

“I will drive you home.”

“Eh, uh, but if I just rest a bit more...”

“I will drive you home.”

“Uhh, if you say so.”

Being possessed by the Leanan sídhe, Lloyd was also under the influence of fairy magic, so he could have possibly sensed the silent malice from the young male servant.

Although he was absolutely loyal only to Edgar, he could barely comprehend any human feelings, and to someone who became a hindrance to his master, he would easily release hostility towards them.

Lloyd was insensitive to Edgar’s sarcasm, but as he shivered when Raven

touched his shoulder he looked like he was threatened as he taken away so easily.

Lately Raven was beginning to understand that he can't be reckless and hurt others at his will, but Lydia was still worried.

On the other hand, Edgar saw Lloyd being escorted away, and seemed refreshed as he smiled satisfyingly.



“Mr. Lloyd is an employee of the cigarette shop on Kings Way. There is no mistake that he is the man that is approaching the lady Norma of the Browser family.”

Edgar, who arrived home, listened to Raven's report who sent Lloyd home, and made a crease in his brow.

At Lydia's house, when he heard the name Lloyd and remembered the story that Browser told him the other day, he had a bad feeling.

First of all, this with this man named Lloyd, and his acquaintance with the nub of the problem daughter was because he was squatting down in front of her house from not feeling well, which was exactly the same in Lydia's case.

Lydia's family, the Carltons, were not particular wealthy, but looking from society in general they would appear to live in comfortable well-to-do circumstances. For this man who was aiming to marry with a daughter from a wealthy family, there was a possibility that she would become the next target in case he failed with the Browser daughter.

“Thank god I stopped by Lydia's house. That feeling of wanting to see her must have been me sensing the danger she was in.”

“.....Surely.”

Raven, who gave his responses with a blank look, knew that Edgar was listed on the blacklist at Lydia's house.

It means that compared to the possibly sick Lloyd, Edgar, who came when the man of the house was absent, was actually the more dangerous visitor.

Even the housekeeper had been checking in the room while he was enjoying a happy moment talking with Lydia in the drawing room to make sure nothing was amiss.

“Raven, did you make sure and tell Lloyd that Lydia already has a man like me?”

“Yes.”

“Just to be safe, Lydia needs to be told to not get involved with Lloyd.”

“I’m to tell her?”

“If I said it, then it’ll only sound like I’m jealous.”

“It sounds like jealousy.”

Although his emotions were still underdeveloped, he was sharp sometimes.

“...Raven, it looks like you still can’t tell the difference between jealousy and the deep love I have for thinking what’s best for her.”

He, who humbled himself earnestly, wasn’t able to distinguish that which was his master’s sophistry.



The next day, Lydia came to work to the Earl house, and hearing that Edgar was no present, thought she would be able to spend the morning calmly.

When Edgar is around, she couldn’t make good progress in her work, and when he periodically had his schedule open, that was a disaster. All day, Lydia would become his playmate.

Of course Lydia wasn’t aware that it wasn’t that Edgar happened to have nothing in his schedule but he was opening his schedule to spend time with her. Anyway, if he’s not here that was convenient.

Lydia looked over to Raven who was bringing her tea.

“Excuse me, Raven but didn’t you drive Mr. Lloyd home yesterday? Could you tell me where his house is?”

She was worried about Lloyd who was still possessed by the Leanan sídhe.

From her observation yesterday, she was sure Raven had said something to Lloyd by Edgar’s order, and although Lloyd didn’t come to see Lydia, at this rate, he won’t be safe.

“I cannot tell you,” responded Raven in a rigid tone.

So Edgar ordered him this too.

“Why is that? He is someone I am helping.”

“I think its best to not get involved with him. He made rumors with women that are not pleasant to the ears.”

He did have the looks and aura that could make women warm up to him; but.

“Does your master have the right to judge the rumors of other women? And besides its not like I’m curious about him in that way, I’m just worried about him as a Fairy Doctor. He’s possessed by a fairy sprite!”

“Lord Edgar only wishes that Miss Carlton doesn’t get hurt out of his deep love for you.”

His reply was so dignified which could mean that Edgar had taught him to lie in order to camouflage.

And because she could guess that, Lydia became furious.

“Where in that man is any deep love? And besides, the fact that he didn’t take you with him when it’s morning proves that he’s off playing with a woman!”

It must have been the truth, as Raven was silent for a few seconds, and quickly said “He was busy,” and played ignorant.

Busy? But being Edgar’s valet was his job.

“Why does he not like that I’m around other men so much? I am not his possession!”

“...Excuse me.”

The young man whisked out of the room, he must be taking precaution so that he wouldn’t widen the tear in his story any further.

So he was with a woman.

Lydia became even more enraged.

Lloyd is a poor man that’s been enchanted by a fairy. I can’t let Edgar get in my way!

Lydia’s zeal must have worked, because Lloyd unexpectedly came to pay a visit to Lydia’s house.

“Ah Miss Carlton, it was just as you said. A fairy appeared!”he cried out, as soon as he saw her. He looked to be in frantic distress, and seemed like he rushed here as soon as he was done working.

“Uh, please calm down. Let’s talk inside, please come in,”said Lydia trying to calm him down and invited him into the drawing room. He had more strength in the way of his walk but still had a white tired expression on his face.

“Oh yes, I’m sorry about the last time. Did the servant of the Earl Ashenbert say

something threatening to you?”

But he didn't seem to be scared at all, and as if he had forgotten about such a thing as he tilted his head.

“Oh yes, right, right. I was told that if I played any tricks on you, I would be made into a stuffed animal and put on display at the British Museum. He has quite a good sense of humor.”

Humor? She was sure that half of it was serious.

“The Earl must have special feelings for you. But there should be no need for him to be jealous of me just because you treat him coldly.”

His tone didn't sound sarcastic, so he was either bold, or insensitive.

If Edgar were to hear this, Lloyd wouldn't be pardoned with by being made into a stuffed animal.

But whatever anybody said, Lydia was the only one Lloyd could rely on after he became aware that he was possessed by a fairy.

He must have had no time to spare worrying about the threats from the Earl.

“More importantly Miss Carlton, the fairy! I was trying not to sleep yesterday but she appeared again. Even if I hid in the closet, she'd pass right through the door. What should I do?!”

Not giving time even to sit down in a chair, as soon as he entered the room Lloyd went back to the topic.

Lydia decided that they wouldn't have time for gossip so she also replied.

“I thought about it but what would be best to ward off the Leanan sídhe would to get married. I recall that you said you were a bachelor.”

“Yes, but...marriage?” There was confusion swirling in Lloyd's pleading eyes.

Even though there was no other option, Lydia gave a deep sigh thinking it over. Getting married wasn't something that could be done at first thought.

“So there isn't any other way?”

“There are cases when the Leanan sídhe would shift their attention to another man, but I'm sure we can't wait for that to happen? What's definitely sure is that they only attached to bachelors.”

Slumping down, he pondered over that in his head.

“I'm sure the biggest problem would be a marriage candidate.”

“Actually there is a woman I’m in love with. But her family won’t approve of our marriage...”

“My goodness, why would they disapprove?”

“Because, we’re from different classes. She’s from a family of noble birth, and I can’t compare to that....” As he spoke, he lifted his head up and continued to defend himself. “But she really is a wonderful person. She returned my feelings from the beginning without caring about my class, and even said that she would elope with me if her parent’s disapproved.”

Hearing about eloping, the story of the book she read came to mind, and even though it was somebody else’s problem it was exciting.

Of course she couldn’t irresponsibly recommend it just because it was romantic, but his life depended on it.

“Mr. Lloyd, of course you only wish to marry her don’t you.”

“Of course, most definitely. Even if it was to save myself, I couldn’t imagine anybody else.”

What a loyal love, thought Lydia.

Edgar made Raven say that Lloyd was a man who was bad about women but she only was disgusted at what a careless lie he made.

“Then, isn’t there nothing to think over about?”

Lloyd chewed that over in his head, but took a deep breath.

“It’s not that I don’t trust her feelings, but she has a dreamy kind of person, like she’s in love with love. When the topic of eloping came up, it was as if she was the heroine of a romance novel. But in reality there’s more than 300 miles to Gretna Green and there’s nothing elegant in the reality of riding in a carriage for so long, and I’m worried that she might want to quit in the middle of it...”

Ride in a carriage for 300 miles?

It was a surprise but if she thought about it, Lydia didn’t know anything about what the steps were if one really wanted to elope. She only read part of the book that had all the details about the process.

It couldn’t be helped that a daughter, who grew up in the tender care of a good family, thought of Lloyd’s idea of eloping as the last resort, as something of a romantic journey, but there was one thing that was still incomprehensible to

her.

“Uh, where exactly is Gretna Green?”

“Eh? Oh, it’s in Scotland. A small town near the border of Scotland and England.”

I see; it really is far.

“Is it your hometown?”

“No, I was born in London.”

“Eh, then why go somewhere so far? If you had your wedding secretly in a town nearby, then there’s nothing that could bring the two of you apart.”

A runaway wedding was a good thing, but if it was a legal wedding then there wouldn’t be any scar left on a woman’s honor. Rather, if a woman were to live with a man without marriage or to getting an annulment was more of a dishonor.

That means if the marriage was fulfilled, then even the disapproving parents would have to acknowledge.

But Lloyd lowered his head as if he was troubled by Lydia’s remark.

“Miss Carlton, did you by chance just recently arrive in London?”

“Yes actually. I have been living in Scotland all my life.”

Finally understanding, he nodded.

“In England, only those who had carried the proper ceremony in a Christian church are approved as husband and wife. But the laws differ in Scotland, so even if it isn’t a church wedding, as long as the couple has two witnesses then their marriage is legalized. It means that if you don’t have the time to carry out all the proper procedures and you don’t want anyone to interfere and become an official husband and wife then the only place for the ceremony is in Scotland.”

I see. For Lydia, the topic of England’s marriage rights was unrelated to her.

Even though England and Scotland were under Great Britain rule, they were originally separate countries and had their own laws.

Because of that, the runaway marriages that were considered illegal in England would be legal in Scotland.

“Gretna Green is a place where you can get married as soon as you cross the

border, so for the British it's a runaway wedding paradise."

"Oh, I see. But I think that it would be faster to go by train than by carriage."

"In her favorite book they go by carriage. Anyways she seems to want to do it according to the book, and if we were to go through with it, then I want to make her dream come true."

He must really care dearly for that lady, felt Lydia, and nodded deeply as if sympathizing.

"If you have discussed with her in so much detail, then all you have to do is deciding to do it. Even if she is dreams about a story, if she has the will to elope then I believe that she's serious."

"Do you think so?"

"At any rate, why don't you try and talk with her one more time?"

Lloyd looked up at Lydia uneasily still with his back rounded, but eventually he straightened his back.

"You're right..... It's no use to mull over it. I'll go and talk to her."

"Ah, when you're discussing about the elopement, make sure to do it while the sun is up. It'll be troublesome if the Leanan sídhe finds out that your trying to ward her off."

Lloyd nervously looked around the room.

"It's alright. Right now the sídhe isn't here. But normally she would be somewhere near your presence. She appears at sunset or night, but please also be careful on dark rainy days."

"Thank you so much. You truly are a kind person. I don't how I can thank you."

He smiled so helplessly, he was the kind of person that one couldn't help but reach their hand out to help. Even if he was a man, it was cute.

Lydia had a clear good impression with him.

"Um, I know that you've done so much so far, but may I ask another favor from you?"

"Of course, what is it?"

"I would like to borrow your name. I want to send her a letter to meet with her but with my name it probably won't make it to her hands."

Of course that was fairly easy for Lydia.

He was encouraged by Lydia who agreed to his request without hesitation, and after mounding up his new resolve, Lloyd went home looking like he got back his strength.



Mr. Browser watched satisfyingly as his daughter Norma was invited by the Earl Ashenbert and was leaving to go out happily.

For his introverted daughter whose only hobby was horse riding, it seems she finally understood that a man from the aristocracy would willingly go along with her hobby.

With Lloyd, he was sure he never even rode a horse.

In his eyes, it looked like Norma was surrendering to the Earl's charm. Of course she would. The Earl was much more suited for his daughter than that a greedy man like Lloyd.

"I wonder what the Earl thinks of Norma. Have you heard of anything?"

Browser asked Norma's governess who just appeared before him.

"He spoke of her as an honest and pure young lady."

"Does that mean we have a chance?"

"She is a lady that I educated. There is no gentleman that wouldn't be pleased with her," she replied proudly. Of course that's true, thought Browser.

"But the Earl has so many female acquaintances."

"All of them are just playmates. It doesn't look like there is one to make him consider marriage." Once she cuts off her train of speech, the governess meaningfully lowered her voice. "Although, there is one, I hear that he is courting a young woman the same age as my lady."

"Is that true?"

"It's only a rumor, but it's the daughter of a professor that the Earl deeply admires, and she was even written in the gossip papers as his true love. But she isn't from the high society, so I don't think he's serious."

The governess said so, but the part about her being the same age as Norma, was a worry for Browser.

The Earl Ashenbert had only recently arrived aback in England, and as he lived overseas for a long period, he didn't seem to priority the family background to

his marriage partner. And, if it was a daughter from a family who had ties with the Earl, then it isn't a terrible difference in their social class to make it hard for marriage.

"What is that woman's name?"

"I think it was Miss Carlton."

Browser snapped up and darted his eyes to the table beside him.

All the letters addressed to Normal were first sent to him, her father. Of course that was because he planned to slip out the letters that were from Lloyd.

There was an unfamiliar addressee's name on one of the letters in the pile, but since it looked like the name of a woman, he thought it may be a new friend of Norma's.

Once again he picked up that letter.

The addressee's name was Lydia Carlton.

He didn't hesitate to cut open the seal. In it, there was a letter from Lloyd asking Normal to meet him.

"What is the meaning of this?"

Did Lloyd have some kind of ulterior motive by approaching this girl who was acquainted with the Earl?

It would have been great if Lloyd would just give up on Norma and go off with this girl on a runaway wedding or something, he thought, and was about to rip the letter, when he stopped to think it over.

Maybe this could be useful. I'll go to the meeting place of the letter and see Lloyd, thought Browser.



It wasn't long for Lloyd to come to Lydia's residence, who completely believed that his letter arrived safely to the hands of Miss Norma, to report that she agreed to his plan to elope.

Even through all of this, Lloyd was still getting drained of his life force by the fairy; the quicker the marriage the better.

Hearing that their departure was tomorrow night, Lydia breathed a deep sigh of relief for now. All that was left was to watch over and hope that the elopement of the two were successful. Of course she did want to answer to Lloyd's hope as

he thought that Lydia's assistance was absolutely necessary.

That day, Lydia made up her mind and sneaked into Edgar's study. She wanted to look for the romance novel from earlier to get information that might help Lloyd's elopement. As she searched the shelves of the bookcase, she quickly spotted the familiar blue book cover.

She was relieved as she gripped the cover to pull it out from the shelf, but as soon as she yanked it out all the books that were on the same shelf came falling out like an avalanche.

"Ahhh!"

Lydia jumped back in surprise and at the spot where her feet were, a small pile of books came crashing down. Lydia stood in shock and disbelief but then came the number one voice that she didn't want to hear.

"Welcome to my study."

It was Edgar, who was supposed to be gone and not in the house.

Lydia panicked at being discovered of her entry into his study without permission.

"Uh, I'm so sorry, I...., I had just barely touched it. Umm, I couldn't help it, the door was open a crack..."

"If it was you, then you're always welcome to come into my study, or my bedchamber."

As he had approached her, he must have noticed the book that was in Lydia's hands. He smiled with a grin like he found something signifying.

"That was booby-trapped so when you pull that book out, the rest of them come falling out all at once."

Huh?

"...For what purpose?"

"In the case you become interested in eloping, I thought that you would naturally be curious as to what happens in the rest of the story."

"Wh-what are you thinking?!"

"So, if I heard a loud commotion, I could arrive at the scene of the crime immediately and catch you."

Catch me?!

Lydia felt like he compared her to some wild bird caught in a trap. He walked right up to her and she tried to back away but he only cornered her into the bookcase.

“Who are you casting for your eloping partner?”

He spoke in a deep, melting voice to her, as he played with Lydia’s reddish-brown hair, twirling around with his finger.

“You have to say me, or I won’t let you borrow that book.”

“I have no interest in eloping. A friend, yes, my friend is thinking about eloping, so I thought I should know the process so that I could think of anyway I could do to help.”

Edgar’s expression suddenly became very forbidding.

“You didn’t happen to meet Lloyd again did you?”

Why did he know?!

“It doesn’t matter to you. I decided I’m going to celebrate his marriage. That’s right, Mr. Lloyd loves a woman who he is seriously considering to marry. You surely did talk bad of him, but he isn’t that bad of a person.”

“Lydia, if a man said he had a lover then most women would let their guard down. You can’t fall into a trap set by a man who says that he isn’t doing well in his relationship and tries to be alone with you seeking for your advice.”

“Tha-that’s something only someone like you would think up!”

“I’m worried. You’re so soft-hearted and so kind to others, I’m worried you might be deceived by a bad man.”

There is no more of a bad man than you.

“You look at yourself. Why don’t you stop tricking young women?”

“I’m not tricking anybody.”

“Fine, then the marriage arrangement between the daughter you’ve been seeing for a while must be going well, congratulations.”

Saying her fill, Lydia slipped past him. But he rushed to grab Lydia’s arm with a worried expression.

“Wait, I don’t know who you heard it from, but there’s no such marriage arrangement.”

“The maids here were rumoring about it. An impressive gentleman came here

directly with a gracious dowry, asking you to take his daughter's hand in marriage, didn't he? And so that's why you've been seeing that daughter every day now."

"You're wrong, I was just asked to cheer up a daughter of an acquaintance of mine. I already told them that I have someone I have serious feelings for..."

"Oh, I didn't know you had someone like that."

"Lydia."

He looked unusually troubled which made Lydia feel victorious.

"But telling a lady that you have a lover, is just a step in trying to win her down, right? Then, good luck."

For Lydia who was always being talked down, she thought she was successfully able to counter-argue with him.

Shutting the door forcefully, she exited the study refreshed but once she returned to her office, she suddenly felt her anger rising.

He really is such a womanizer.

But I wonder if it's a real marriage arrangement.

It wouldn't be any surprise for Edgar, who was now an Earl, to have however many marriage arrangements lined up before him. No matter what kind of sweet talk he threw at her, Lydia didn't think that she had a special attraction that could win against an aristocrat's daughter.

And thinking those things in her head, the more and more she thought about it, she wasn't feeling any bit refreshed but for some reason started to become depressed.

More importantly, she needed to learn a bit more about eloping. Lydia softly opened the book.

On a shining moon night, the two of them slipped out of their homes and meet up with each other. From there, their long escape journey began.

The carriage pulled by four horses galloped across the town streets.

How many more miles is there till we reach Scotland? The pursuing party that followed them to break them apart slowly crept up behind them in their carriage.

By engrossing herself in the story, Lydia tried to take her mind away from her

depressed feelings.



It's unbelievable how soft-hearted Lydia is to want to help out on an elopement, mumbled Nico, as he slipped through the fence. Getting down on all

fours pretending to be a feline, he passed by the lane swiftly walking over to the brick colored building.

He made sure no one saw him as he climbed up on to a windowsill of the mansion where Lloyd's lover apparently lives. "Nevertheless, making the departure tonight is just too sudden." He wanted to wait until the moon came out to departure and promised to meet up with her in a place in the outskirts of London to escape being noticed.

At that time, Lloyd also asked for Lydia to accompany him to there.

When it came to the Lady Norma, he was apparently being watched, and so if he got on a hack to get out of London by himself, there was the possibility that their elopement plan would be figured out immediately.

If Lydia accompanied him, no one would imagine that he would try to elope with Lady Norma with another woman with him.

And how Nico came in all of this, was that he was supposed to make sure that the daughter of this house was safely able to sneak out of the house without being seen by anyone.

Lydia asked him to help her if something happened as if so easily, but Nico thought to himself how would I help in what way.

All he could do was wish that the daughter didn't screw up anything.

"Oh bother, I don't want to do this."

Peeking into the room where light was spilling out, there must have been some sort of banquet starting as there were crowds of people making conversation with each other.

There were a number of young ladies, but you could immediately judge who was Lady Norma.

She was a girl who gave a plain impression, and listened and responded with a shy expression. She was dressed extravagantly, but appeared like she didn't fit in

with the lavish people and place.

Even the invited young men went past the main host's daughter, maybe because she didn't stand out or they had no interest in her.

For a girl who was completely used to that sort of treatment, maybe Lloyd was different.

Even so, she continued to just sit in the chair. If she didn't leave pretty soon she wouldn't make it in time, but she still didn't show a hint of a hurry.

"Huh?" Just then Nico noticed the blond young man that walked up to the girl and pressed himself up to the window.

"Isn't that the Earl?"

With the soft composure and perfect smile, he lowered his face to girl and whispered something to her. There was no mistake, it was that rake.

Edgar was already a popular figure in the high society of London. It seems like this house is also high class, so it wouldn't be a surprise if he were invited to their ball.

However, if he was interested in Lady Norma and was following her, then she wouldn't be able to slip out of the house.

"Oh, no, this is bad."

Nico circled over to the terrace, and from an open window slipped inside.

When he was about to head over to the open hall they were in, he heard a voice come from a different room.

"My lord, so did Mr. Lloyd promise to never appear in front of the young miss ever again?"

"Who knows, he kept quiet, but must have understood."

The one that was called lord must be the lord of this house, Browser. The woman was not a servant, more like at a position of the daughter's governess.

"Although he was surprised that I showed up at the secret location where he was suppose to meet up with Norma."

Huh?

Nico, tilted his head in confusion. Did this old man get his hands on the letter that was suppose to call our Norma and open it.

"I told him that Norma showed me the letter. And that she has a brilliant

proposal and is deeply in love with her suitor the Earl Ashenbert and that she has long forgotten about Lloyd.”



“Did he believe that?”

“I let him see Norma from afar. That was just when the Earl invited Norma to horseback riding in Rotten Row. Seeing the two of them having fun, he must have realized that he has her no longer.”

Wait a minute. Lloyd didn’t make the promise with Norma to elope tonight?

“That is a relief to hear. Besides he was a man who approached the young miss aiming for her fortune. He wouldn’t linger on one target once he’s figured that he has no chance.”

Wanting the fortune? Nico pricked his ear up to listen closer.

“Good god, I heard that there were con-artists for ages who tricked young rich daughters into eloping to live lavishly off their money or fortune, but I never imagined my own daughter would become a target.”

“Now that I remember, Mr. Lloyd seems to be approaching the young lady that was rumored with the Earl once.”

“That is a different matter, it was nothing to do with me who that man runs off with.”

Said Browser irresponsibly, pulling the edges of his mouth up slightly.

That, oh no, could that be Lydia?

Hmmm, Nico stood up on his back legs and folded his arms to think it over.

Lloyd said to Lydia that the Lady Norma had agreed to his elopement. Then why did he lie.

Even now, if he knew that she wasn't coming, then that means he was headed to the outskirts with Lydia.

That means, he plans to take Lydia with him in place of Norma

Before his life is sucked away by the Leanan sídhe, Lloyd needs to marry someone in order to save himself.

Lydia didn't have a fortune compared to the Browser family but for Lloyd right now, his life was more important than inheriting a fortune.

"That's right, he did seem like the type to take the liberty and get over-familiar with women and once Norma is out of the picture and he sets his eyes on Lydia who happened to show him her kindness, then I shouldn't taking my time right now!"

It was just when he was about to turn to dash out from the door's shadow. Someone suddenly grabbed a hold of the ruff on Nico's neck. He was dangled up off his feet.

"I finally found you, you little pest. How dare you flip over the pudding that took so much time to prepare!"

The woman looked like one of the kitchen maids, and she started to walk off with the Nico dangling by his neck.

"No, that wasn't me!" He struggled to get free by moving around his legs but the maid didn't loosen her grip.

"I'm not a cat! Hey let me go! You've ruffling my fur!"

Even if he yelled with all his might, to the maid's ear it only seemed to sound like a cat that was howling its head off.

"Good lord, I should throw you into the washing pot."

"No, stop it," Nico searched the area to look for an escape.

And then his eyes stopped on Edgar who was in the landing of the stairs. Being alone together with Norma who he must have lead away from the hall, he seemed to be in full flirting mode. He whispered something into the young girl's

ears who was flushed red in her cheeks as her hands were held by his.

“Hey Earl! Come over here and help me!”

Edgar just moved his eyes toward Nico and the maid’s direction. But, simply ignoring the cat, he turned back to the girl. He even put his hand on her shoulders casually.

“Oh fine, so women are more important! ...You scoundrel, flirt! You don’t care what happens to Lydia at all!”

“Excuse me, miss.” Just then he heard Edgar’s voice stopping the maid.

“That cat is a pet of mine that I brought along, is there a problem?”

Being called a pet, Nico felt humiliated and sick, but seeing the maid who immediately dropped him and left after meekly excused herself which made the chagrin lift off his chest a little.

“Nico, was there something that happened to Lydia?”

But then he was only picked right back up by Edgar at the scruff of his neck.

“Hey don’t pick me up.”

“How’s Lydia?”

This egotistical Earl, wouldn’t make a concession for Nico in times like this. Reluctantly Nico remained held at the scruff of his neck like a cat and spoke humiliatingly.

“Lloyd told Lydia that he made a promise to elope with the daughter of this house tonight and asked for her help. That man, he’s possessed by a fae, and he’ll die unless scares away the fairy by marrying someone, and so Lydia’s being soft on him. Right now the two of them should be heading to the spot that he was going to meet up with the Lady Norma in the outskirts of London.”

“Elope from now? She’s here right now and doesn’t seem to be preparing to go, besides the ball is about to start.”

“That’s why that Lloyd is hoodwinking Lydia. Because he figured he couldn’t marry that girl, he must be planning to take Lydia with him and force her to consent to marrying him...”

Nico was suddenly tossed away.

Edgar half-forcefully asked his pardon from the dumbfounded Lady Norma and swiftly headed to the entrance hall.

Nico got up and scurried after him.

The hackney carriage that was carrying Lydia and Lloyd, left the London town buildings and was going along a wooded dirt road.

In between the short trees, the round white moon was slowly creeping its way up into the darkening sky.

Lydia looked up at it with the strange feeling that this reminded her of the eloping scene that was in the romance novel.

For Norma, this would be the romantic trip that she dreamed of.

“I hope that she snuck out safely.”

Lloyd had a nervous look the whole way, and sat silent with his eyes fixed on the landscape outside the window.

She was told that further along this road, there was a noticeable spot that had two high trees standing together. Apparently, that was the meeting place that had also come out in the novel.

Lydia was planning to watch off the both of their departures and head back to London.

“Mr. Lloyd, are you feeling all right?”

“Yes, I’m fine. But, the fae, is still near me, isn’t it?”

“She doesn’t look like she’s come inside the hackney...”whispered Lydia.“If she heard about the elopement, she might try to interfere, so even if you meet with Miss Norma, you mustn’t talk about it.”

He was able to nod back to her, but then just stared towards Lydia.

Just then, Lloyd’s expression suddenly turned grief-stricken and mournful.

“Miss Lydia, there is something that I must apologize to you for.”

“Huh?”

“To tell you the truth, Norma isn’t coming.”

Surprised, Lydia bent herself forward. “I don’t understand, what happened?”

“She must become happy with the right man that she deserves. And because I thought so, I realized that I needed to give her up.”

“But, then you wouldn’t be able to fend off the Leanan sídhe.”

“Yes, but then, I’m all right with that. As long as she’s happy.” From his expression, she could see his unwavering resolve.

But, if he thought so, then why did he talk to me like he was going through with this runaway.

There didn't seem to be a point of going all the way and taking Lydia out of London.

Just as she was sensing something suspicious, Lloyd reached over and grabbed Lydia's arm.

"I have a favor to ask you. Miss Lydia, please give up your courtship with the Earl Ashenbert."

"Eh, what, what are you..."

"Norma apparently has an arrangement with the Earl. And it looks like she's built feelings for the Earl, I saw the two of them looking happy, enjoying horseback riding with each other. She seemed so much happier than when she was with me."

Oh my god, was the woman that Edgar had been seeing lately, Miss Browser?

"Sir Browser may think of me as after her fortune and wealth, but I truly had sincere feelings for Norma. I just wanted him to know only that, but then he said that I should take you, for Norma's sake, and said that I should try to separate you from the Earl."

"I-I'm not, there's nothing between me and Edgar"

"I'm aware of that. More or less, it seemed like the Earl was just teasing you. But, then what I plan to do, shouldn't be something that would hurt you that much. Anyway, as long as the Earl loses his interest in you, then there's a chance that the arrangement with Norma would work out well, wouldn't it?"

Lydia had not idea what Edgar was planning on doing in his approach of the Lady Norma.

She had a feeling like she wanted to think he had the intention of just playing around and flirting with her, but Lydia just took in a deep breath to calm herself down.

"What are you planning to do with me?"

"Please come along with me for just a while longer. Just that. I have no intention of harming you in any way."

It looks like he planned to do a sham elopement.

If Edgar was offered an arrangement by the Browser family, then he would have found out that Lydia was purloined by Browser's servant who was monitoring Lloyd. If Edgar were to hear that Lloyd, who had approached Norma to elope with her, changed his target to Lydia, then even he would believe it.

Perhaps if someone had the title of Earl, then one could assume that his feelings would disappear for a girl who tried to elope with another man.

Yes, Edgar might give up.

On a girl who wouldn't listen to his warnings and warm up to a man after another's fortune and become interested in eloping.

But Lloyd wasn't after money. But just because he was pure and sincere, this was becoming a misfortunate situation for Lydia.

Misfortunate?

It was just that Edgar might lose interest in Lydia, that's all.

"I'll drop you off at the next town. You can still return to London by train."

So no disgraceful rumors about an unsuccessful elopement would spread and so that this would only reach Edgar's ears as just a rendezvous escape that lasted a few hours. If it turned out like that then Lloyd thought that Lydia wouldn't be that hurt.

That's right, who cares if Edgar's attitude changes. It just means that he was indeed that low of a level frivolous man.

Lydia went over that in her head, and tried to focus her attention away from the prickle that she felt paining her heart.

She only wanted to help Lloyd as a Fairy Doctor. She had no regret.

Since she wasn't able to help him, then she wouldn't mind at least giving her hand in helping Sir Browser understand his serious, earnest feelings.

It was just when she thought that.

".....Was I wrong?"

"Huh....?"

"Oh, no, Uh, Miss Lydia, please don't cry."

I'm crying? Lydia flustered and rushed her eyes.

"Oh, no, was there someone you love in London?No, it must be the Earl, isn't it? You really care about him..."

"No, no, I don't! There is absolutely no way of that happening." But even Lydia didn't know the reason why her heart was so bothered.

"I'm sorry, I had no intention of hurting you." Alarmed and thrown off balance, Lloyd dropped his head into his hands. Then lifted it back up.

"We have to go back. I was wrong to get you involved."

"No, I, I'm fine. Please go on..."

Suddenly, the hack was heavily shaken.

They heard the neigh of the horses and their bodies were tossed around on the seats. Lydia's shoulder smashed against the wall, and as she tried to endure the pain, she felt the carriage finally easing to a halt.

"Wh-what happened...?" She managed to somehow lift herself up.

Beyond the peep hole, the driver was unconscious, slumped limp in his seat.

What she saw outside was the trees that were lighted up by the moon light and the shadow of a horse that was not of their hack group.

A horse with a saddle. Which means, it must be a horse that someone was riding.

They could have nearly crashed headfirst into someone as they were just approaching a crossroads, but there didn't seem to be anyone lying on the road who could have been thrown off their horse.

Just when she turned to face Lloyd, just beyond where Lydia was looking, out of the blue, the glass window was shattered. Before she had time to scream, an arm reached in wrapped around Lloyd's neck. Pinning him to the wall, the arm constricted the man's neck.

The door on the other side of the hack was opened with great force, and Lydia was pulled outside without a moment to scream.

"No, let me go! You thief! We don't have any money!"

"Lydia, it's me."

It was a familiar soft voice. When she looked up, the ash mauve eyes were looking back at her closely.

"....Edgar.....?"

"I'm so glad I made it. I didn't know what to do if I couldn't catch up," he said and snuggled her head with his arms.

He caressed her hair as if it relieved him, and that made Lydia lean against him making sure that the supposition she had, just earlier, that Edgar's attitude might change, was only her imagination.

"Were you scared? But everything is all right now. I'll make sure he soundly pays for it."

She was embraced even tighter, but Lydia came to her senses.

"Raven, drag him out."

Edgar's loyal servant roughly shoved Lloyd out. Seeing him tumble out of the carriage, Lydia tried to run over to help him, but Lydia had his arms gripped on her and held her in place.

"Please, don't be rough with Mr. Lloyd."

"He was the man who tried to kidnap you."

"Kidnap?Weren't you told that I eloped....?"

"You would never open your heart up to another man than me."

I never even opened up to you either.

"Regardless, there were pressuring circumstances behind this."

"He tried to disgrace my dearest lady's honor. I will never forgive."

It looked like Edgar, who was not budging an inch about it, clearly was furious. But at his anger Lydia felt rebellious.

"All of this happened because you tried to seduce his lover, you know!"

"I never seduced. I was only asked by Lord Brower to make Lady Norma take an interest in a proper gentleman."

Even so, there was no mistake that he must have found it amusing and took up the act as a perk.

"But because of that, Lord Brower felt that an arrangement between you and Lady Norma would be successful. That's why he made Mr. Lloyd take me away and conspired to make you lose interest in me."

"What?"

Lydia wanted to calm Edgar down, but this may have just sparked a larger flame with her oily remark.

"So he tried to disgrace my lover, and try to separate you from me? That bloody fox, I never agreed to any arrangement, yet he was conspiring with Lloyd!"

“Like I said you’re wrong about...”

“If he thinks that I’ll change my mind, then he’s made a serious mistake. Lydia know, from experience through and through, that you’re not the kind of woman that would be won over by a man so easily. That’s why I’ve been thinking. I had absolutely no intention of giving you up. If I weren’t able to catch up and you were forced to through a marriage ceremony with Lloyd, I was planning to pull some strings to force them to nullify it and even seriously considered bribing the bishop of the Church of England.”

“.....Huh?” Baffled she lifted her head and was met with his longing eyes filled with hurt.

If Lydia wasn’t intending on it, and even if the marriage was legalized with another man, then was he still intending on coming after her. It was all so unexpected that she didn’t know how to react.

Is he just using his smart mouth to say something convenient that he didn’t mean? Even if she thought that, she couldn’t control her cheeks from heating up.

But, using pressure and black-mail was the kind of way of thinking of Edgar.

Lydia couldn’t find anything to say and remained quiet, and he must have thought her reaction that she understood and so Edgar walked over to Lloyd who was being held down by Raven.

“Mister Lloyd, it seems like Lydia was just taking pity on you, but I’m not that open-hearted. Anyone should have been fine if you were planning on going on an elopement with their family fortune in mind. I’ll have you learn your lesson that it was your mistake to put your hands on her.”



Lydia grabbed onto Edgar who had the scruff of Llyod's shirt in his hand to stop him.

"No, don't hurt him, Edgar! Mister Lloyd just seriously loves Lady Norma. He thought if her feelings had switched to you then he was going to give up and do as Sir Browser said for her sake!"

"Hey, Lydia, the Leanan sídhe is.."

The one who interrupted was Nico.

He must have accompanied Edgar as he stood atop of the carriage roof and pointed to the sky.

Like she was carrying the moon on her back, a female figure was floating softly in the air as her long, white hair was waving in the wind.

She must have heard about eloping and marriage. The fairy that purposefully made her body appear to human eyes came floating down to land in front of Lloyd.

It looked as if there was light glowing under from her pale white skin and she was wearing an extremely thin veil that looked almost transparent. She was so beautiful but also had a lush and sultry air about her.

She looked at Lloyd with her eyes that were clear as a pond and he stood frozen.

Even Edgar was standing in amazement as his grip on Lloyd went loose as he seemed to be awe-stricken in the sudden appearance of something that was like not of this world.

The Leanan sídhe slowly lifted up her arms as if she was going to wrap them around Lloyd to embrace him.

“No, Stop!” cried out Lydia.

The sídhe was going to take control of Lloyd’s will and take him away somewhere. So that he wouldn’t be able to betray her.

“Mister Lloyd, you mustn’t look at the fairy!”

However, Lloyd couldn’t fight back from the power of the fairy and weakly lifted up his hands.

“Please wait, don’t take him!”

Just then, there was a young woman who came running out of the tree shadows as she shouted out towards them.

It seemed like she had come on horseback by herself and must have been watching them secretly from all this time.

She snatched Lloyd’s hands which were about to touch the Leanan sídhe like she was stealing them back and stood in between them.

As she stood trembling, she didn’t let go of her grip on his hands as she looked back at the fae with strong resolve in her eyes.

“Th-this person is my fiancé! It’s useless for you to possess him!”

Norma, whispered Lloyd in a weak cry.

“I was so surprised when the earl was talking with a cat. Oh, yes, I couldn’t believe that a cat would talk, but it was indeed talking, but the thing I was more surprised about was what it said, that you were possessed by a fairy and nearly dying... So after that, I questioned my father. He told me everything and so I came as fast as I could after the earl.”

“But, Norma, you looked so happy when you were with the earl, and so I thought you might have forgotten about me....”

“You’re not going to believe me? From the beginning, I had told the earl that I already had someone I loved. And so he advised that it was best that we should pretend like we are enjoying each other’s company so that we could let my

father's guard down. And as we did, he was kind enough to advise me on my worries."

That was completely a method he was using to put her guard down. Edgar, who was saying negative things about Lloyd, would have no such intention of helping him out.

Lydia had that thought, but this wasn't the time to be thinking of sarcastic things about Edgar.

Because, the Leanan sídhe had grabbed ahold of Lloyd's shoulder.

Norma resisted by clinging onto him.

Lloyd too, must have finally made up his mind and let out a strong, firm yell.

".....L-let go of me! I'm in love with Norma. I'm going to marry her!"

A strong tornado-like wind erupted out of no where.

The fairy's long hair wrapped around Lloyd like they had a will of their own which was so strong that his hand was nearly going to be pulled away from Norma's.

"Leanan sídhe, listen to me!" cried out Lydia.

"Please, please let that man go. You're a being who should find a man whose pledged his soul to the arts, aren't you?"

As Lydia wobbled from the wind, she continued on.

"There is sure to be a man who desires you as his muse more than a human woman!"

She thought she saw the sídhe had looked over to her for an instant.

She felt the tension of the fairy magic loosen, which made Lydiathink that the fae had understood her and so she relaxed; but.

"But still, she really is a beauty."

She heard Edgar's whisper.

"Idiot, don't say anything unnecessary," panicked Lydia.

In an instant, the wind had fallen and that was because the Leanan sídhe turned her face to look over to Edgar.

Lydia felt cold sweat rush out of her.

Oh, no, she might plan on switching over.

Just as she feared, the fairy gracefully turned herself around and was slowly

heading over to their direction.

Lydia didn't think and her body reacted by grabbing onto Edgar's arm.

"No! Don't come! You absolutely can't do that! This man is my....."

Once again, the tree leaves in the area rustled and shook and the sound of heavy winds sounded like they were circling around them.

Lydia stood ready in fear of another gust of wind that might hit them and gripped onto Edgar so that he wouldn't be taken. Just when she felt a pair of warm arms wrap around her as if they were protecting her, everything went silent.

In the dark crossroad path in the forest, the Leanan sídhe was gone and nowhere in sight.

* *

The light of the moon made the shadow of the horse stretch out long across the side of the road.

Lydia had her waist cradle by one of Edgar's arm and was so unbelievably close to him. She wanted to resist but she couldn't allow herself to push him away. Because, she was on top of a galloping horse.

The carriage was used to carry off Lloyd and Norma after the driver was slapped awake and now currently heading to Scotland.

Lydia was left with the option of going home with Edgar and since she couldn't ride a horse by herself, it was inevitable that the situation would turn to this.

A little ways behind them, Raven was riding another horse with Nico.

She wondered if it was a better idea to ride with Raven, but even if she asked for something like that, her request probably wouldn't be considered.

"I wonder if the two of them won't be followed and will be able to peacefully have their wedding," said Lydia, as remaining silent was too unbearably embarrassing for her.

"I'll make sure to tell Sir Browser to not to anything pointless like going after them."

Edgar's tone of voice had a little bit of irritation in it, which could have been because he still had a grudge about Browser telling Lloyd to take Lydia with him. Edgar should have been asked to turn Norma away from Lloyd, but since he

ended up helping them elope, then that means it wasn't that much of a deal to him.

More like he probably was going to demand an apology from Browser with an overbearing attitude.

"By the way, Lydia, what were you going to say back then?"

Out of the blue, he leaned down to whisper suggestively into her ear, which made Lydia flinch up at the air from his breath brushing up against her hair.

"Wh-what do you mean?"

She tried to play dumb just for sake.

"When you protected me from the fairy. I'm your lover?"

".....My employer."

Edgar made a frown like he was a little unsatisfied and suddenly picked up the horse's pace.

Lydia wasn't used to riding on a live horse at all, so that alone surprised her and so she tightened her grip on Edgar's coat.

"No, go slower! I'll fall off!"

"If you answer me honestly."

It probably wasn't that fast of a speed, but to Lydia, it felt like they were cutting through the wind.

"That was..., I was just saying it to ward off the Leanan sídhe!"

"I see. I guess I'll have to have you hold on more tightly."

"You mean brute!"

He snickered as he tightened his arm around her to hold her pressed up to him. He didn't speed down, and yet, with just that gesture she didn't feel any insecurity of falling down.

"While I'm being mean, maybe I should slay you away like this to Scotland. What do you think about having a eloping wedding at your hometown?"

"What are you thinking!"

She panicked because there were times when Edgar would actually go through with the jokes he said.

When she imagined that, she started to feel like the road was different from the way she came.

Lydia swiftly turned her head about.

After she spotted the Londoncity buildings beyond in the distance as they loomed up like shadows under the moon light like they were welcoming them, she relaxed, but at the same time, had a small feeling like pity that they were nearing their arrival soon.

She thought, if it was for a little while longer, then an outing in a moon-lit night wasn't going to be that bad.



Short Story. Magic for me to reach you

(1) What I wish to forget

<London, Choir>

The Christmas carol that was being sung by the children could be heard throughout the park surrounded by the desolate, wintery grove of trees.

The boys and girls were wearing the same new winter coats and singing enthusiastically. The audience could tell from their unsteady voices rising up to soak into the cloudy sky that they had practiced diligently for this day.

Ever since this morning, ladies and gentlemen had gathered under the fir tree that stood out in the open space to listen to the singing children.

"Lord Ashenbert."

Edgar's name was called and so he turned around.

His eyes found a lady wearing a fox-fur scarf and a pearl brooch walking towards him and so he greeted her with a warm smile.

The lady looked up to glance at Edgar's golden hair and blushed at the cheeks. She lowered her eyes down in embarrassment however keeping a smile on her lips and in a cute manner, folded her hands together.

"My lord, thank you for participating in this donation. Thanks to you, the children from the orphanage will be able to spend a warm Christmas." The ones who were singing the song with all their heart were children without parents. And the ladies and gentlemen who had gathered here today were people who came to make a donation for Christmas.

Yes, today was Christmas. Perhaps due to the sense of guilt they felt from their daily lives, there were a multitude of private charities and philanthropies happening, and the people in the upper class who lived their lives normally in great extravagance tried to satisfy their guilty conscience by giving away a small amount of money.

Of course that was not a bad thing. It enables everyone to spend their Christmas in peace and comfort.

"I'm glad I could be of some use, Lady Emily. In fact, I was more touched in your devotion to this charity."

"Oh no, this is nothing...., what I can do for the children is limited. All I really have done was occasionally pay a visit and read books to the children. But even if that's all I can do I still feel that there must be something more I can do for them."

"You are a saint."

When he narrowed his ash-mauve eyes and appeared like he was touched from the bottom of his heart, Ms. Emily's rosy cheeks turned even redder.

Edgar was well aware how he appeared in front of others. He was blessed in looks and knew the right timing to show his noble upbringing and education in his art of conversation.

He felt there didn't exist a woman who wouldn't find him pleasant on their first encounter, and it wasn't that difficult for him to stage himself so that would happen.

It hadn't been that long since he came to know this heiress, but it seemed like she was infatuated with him. And that didn't make him feel unpleasant, so he was able to put on a show as it was needed.

"Um....., would you care to stop by the tea party that will be held after this? There is a small show planned."

"Yes of course."

To his answer, she made an innocent smile filled with joy.

He liked young woman who had their guard down. From here it would go according to his wish which gave him a good feeling.

When a young lady brought up in a good family was educated to not give a second glance to a man from a different class would change her attitude upon hearing that he was a noble, he found it funny but adorable.

She had no idea what Edgar had done in America.

"Oh Lord Ashenbert, I had no idea that you were interested in saving the children less fortunate."

To the interrupting voice, Ms. Emily made a face like she woke up from a dream.

The one who appeared was a lustrous noblewoman who carried a rose aroma about her. She was the flower of society, who captured everyone's eyes with her shining beauty that stood out even in the cold atmosphere of the trees.

To the appearance of such a woman, the younger lady drooped her head as if she yielded to the more powerful, and lightly bowed and left.

"I happen to like children."

"Oh, even boys?"

"Marchioness Lady Blanwick, please don't twist around my pure words. Today is Christmas."

"If you truly love children, then you should hurry and marry."

"Yes, as soon as my bride is chosen."

"Then I must have interrupted you. That young lady just now, was she your target?"

"Who knows?"

When Edgar feigned ignorance, she brought her slender fingers hidden under white gloves and brought them up to her red lips that made a smirk. She was a noblewoman who couldn't help but attract the attention of men around her by just one of her natural movements.

So for a woman like her to begin a conversation with a young earl who had dazzling good looks and was the center of scandals regarding his female acquaintances, it was no surprise that they became the center of attention of the people around them.

However those gazes were shifted to the children to applaud them for finishing their carol song. The two of them started to walk off to get away from the crowd of people.

"That was Ms. Emily from the Postner family. She is diligent in her charity activities, a young lady who wants to do what is right to the point of moral cleanliness. I'm sure she wouldn't allow any ugly vices like adultery."

"I'm a man who prefers to have her jealous. Having a wife that is too tolerant is not my taste."

"I wonder if it ends with just jealousy."

"That is the problem."

Ms. Emily kept on peeking over to them as if worried. Pretending not to notice, Edgar made an elegant smile toward the marchioness.

"Shall I verify that for you? You can find out if her love for you will vanish instantly or if she is so infatuated about you that she becomes jealous."

They stopped their tracks by a bush and she turned around to face Edgar.

She drew her face close to Edgar like lovers would and whispered into his ear.

"Or if she isn't the woman you are after then wouldn't it be the nice thing to do by telling her that she has no hope?"

"Is that for my sake? Isn't it because you wish to drive away your young lover that you grew tired of?"

Besides Emily, Edgar had been feeling a different pairs of eyes watching him. The young man who had been recently rumored with Marchioness Blanwick was following their every move from the corner of the park.

He was the only one who had a look of despair on his face while there was laughter and excited voices coming from the center of the park where warm milk-tea and Christmas presents were being passed out to the children.

"Is that wrong of me?"

He didn't hate married noblewoman who enjoying romance like a game because he would be able to play along with that game as well.

If the two of them pretended to be romantically close and showed off a kiss or two then that poor young man would realize that the Marchioness' favor had completely faded from him.

As a game it would surely be delightfully enjoyable. And it was clear as day that she wanted someone to play around with, so if he were to give in to her invitation he wouldn't be bored at all tonight.

A one-night-love with a beautiful woman without any after-trouble.

It wasn't bad.

However if Edgar were to continue doing such things he came to the idea that Lydia wouldn't return to him.

Edgar's fiancée or the woman Edgar wanted to marry wouldn't believe him even when he promised that he wouldn't cheat and so she asked for her Christmas vacation and returned to her home countryside.

He wondered what she was doing in Scotland right now.

He was trying not to think about her but he couldn't help it.

"I appreciate your offer, my lady, but I believe I couldn't live up to your expectations."

"Oh how unfortunate."

She replied in a tone that didn't sound like she was disappointed at all.

"Then I shall ask for your help on another occasion, Lord Ashenbert."

She seemed so indifferent. That's why Edgar wanted to argue that having a relationship with women like her shouldn't even be considered cheating but Lydia would not be convinced with that.

<Scotland, Fairy Rocks>

In a small town south of Edinburgh, there were enormous rocks that stood on the ground behind the rows of clergy houses next to the church from the past. Lydia had spent much of her childhood there and played around in those grassy fields.

She heard that those lonely rocks which stood in the grassy plains were remains from the prehistoric times and the rocks weren't only placed on the grass plain but existed at the outskirts of town or hilltops but since the grassy plain rocks were the closest to her house it was the perfect playing ground for Lydia when she was a child.

There were always small fairies mingling around the rocks. There was a mysterious energy that lingered around that area which connected the fairy world and the human realm together and it appeared like the rocks were mitigating the natural warp or distorted power that remained in that location.

Long ago, there was someone who recognized that distortion and if that was the reason they placed these powerful stones here, Lydia was put at ease at the thought that someone like her wasn't peculiar at all.

Thanks to that, she could believe she was someone who was absolutely needed to the human world even though she was able to see fairies that were considered fantasy in human society and possessed the ability as a fairy doctor to communicate with them.

But before she found out that the number of people who could see fairies was

extremely low, Lydia had been playing around with fairies thinking all children were did so.

Apparently when she would go out to play, she would step slightly into the fairy realm and would fade out of view from people's eyes and was told by her father later that he went around desperately searching for her.

If it was her mother Lydia was found immediately and she wondered why that was as a young child but she realized that the world she and her fairy doctor mother could not be seen by her father and the townspeople a few years after her mother passed away and became mature.

Remembering that, Lydia came to the same place today. It was Christmas morning, and she came by the grassy plain since she had just gone to nearby church with her father and listened to the sermon.

It must be the time when the small fairies were sleeping, or perhaps they were hiding because it was Christmas as she couldn't find any small fairies about. Lydia walked in a circle to the back of the rocks and rested herself against the stone wall.

This place was indeed peaceful and relaxing. When she came here she would feel like this world was accepting of her.

This enormous planet was so motherly and magnificent that it felt it was engulfing her along with the human world and the fairy realm and made her worries seem so small and insignificant.

My worries...

The root of Lydia's worry was the engagement moonstone ring that was on her ring finger and her eyes would always be led to it. She was still engaged to Edgar due to his whim and now she could not take it off.

The ring shouldn't appear to the human eye due to fairy magic but now she wished that they used their magic on her so she couldn't see it.

Since I'm not Edgar's lover.

When she was with Edgar in London she felt accepted as a fairy doctor so much that she had forgotten about these rocks. She wanted to forget about that as well.

"Hey, no one is here."

Lydia heard a voice and moved her head around to face it. She hadn't noticed until now but saw that there were two people, two young men standing on the other side of the rocks.

It seemed like they couldn't see Lydia who was in the shadows of the rocks from their side. Or perhaps they couldn't see her because she had stepped into the otherworld already.

"That's strange. Mr. Carlton said to bring her back and we'll find her somewhere around here."

Who is it? thought Lydia as she leaned her head to the side.

It seemed like the two men was asked by Lydia's father and came to look for her but she never saw them before.

Lydia's father should be at the clergy house. The pastor was one of her father's friends and her father had stopped by to greet him but their conversation looked like it would take a while so Lydia decided to take a walk.

"Hey, what kind of girl is this Lydia? Is she good-looking?"

One of the men asked the other, so she felt hesitated to go out to meet them now.

"Hmm, maybe she might not?"

What? thought Lydia as she unconsciously made a frown under furrowed eyebrows.

However that would make the young man who just spoke an acquaintance of Lydia. She leaned out once more and quietly took a peek at them.

"But Andy, you haven't seen her for quite some years now right? If you met up with your childhood friend, normally you'd wish she had become really beautiful right?"

Andy? Which means, he was the third son of the pastor family.

"You say childhood friend but it wasn't like we got along or were close or anything."

After she made a good hard inspection at him, she realized that his face which looked back at everything like he was bored and his halting way of speaking was familiar.

She remembered hearing that he entered a boarding school far away and so it

had been a while since she saw him in town. He might have returned home for Christmas a number of times before but the two of them were not close that they would make the effort and see each other.

"She is a strange girl so she didn't hang out with the others in town."

"What do you mean strange?"

The unfamiliar other man seemed to be curious about Lydia and he looked like an energetic young man with distinct facial features.

"She claims she can see fairies. Her mother came from a very rural part of the country and did things similar to a magician."

Not a magician, she was a fairy doctor.

"So what are you going to do if she was pretty?"

"What do you mean what I would do?"

"Your life in a school with only men is still going to go on. The only time you have to spend with a woman is during the holidays. The girls that we saw at the church service just a while ago who I thought looked good all said they were engaged. Anywhere you go, the pretty ones are going to be taken away quickly. But this girl you're talking about, if she is who you say she is, is probably not sold yet. Andy, if you aren't interested in her, then lend her to me. You can't take back your word after you find out that she was pretty all right?"

"Guy, were you not listening to what I was saying?"

"Even if she was a little slow up here, it would be fine as long as she was pretty."

"But she's really plucky."

"Stupid and plucky? Even better."

"It's not something nice like that. When there was a family who was going through a long time of bad luck, she said it was because they cut down the tree in front of their gate. Isn't that a little creepy? The landowner didn't publically criticize or slur her because she was the daughter of the renowned Carlton family, but she was a little troublemaker going around saying stuff like that."

Hearing the conversation of the two, Lydia was finally starting to feel aggravated and so she jumped out of the rock shadow.

"Andy Millar! I will have you know that I have no recollection of ever causing

you any trouble!"

As she gave Andy a glare she also made a threatening glance to the other.

"And besides, I am not a stupid and plucky girl!"

(2) What to remember

<London, Christmas cracker>

"What a peaceful Christmas. Don't you think so, Raven?"

On his way to the Bostner residence, Edgar asked his valet as she watched the scenery go by outside his carriage window. His valet, a young man with bronze skin, who sat next to him, replied "Yes" in his usual calm and indifferent tone of voice.

The houses on the street corners were decorated with holly trees and mistletoe. The window displays of the shops and the people who were looking at them as they walked by looked happy as they smiled even more than usually. The last time Edgar experienced this kind of Christmas was before the incident 9 years ago when his parents were killed.

The last Christmas he spent in England according to his memory was at the family manor house where there was a large Christmas tree decorated with sparkling Christmas ornaments. There were also countless candles placed around the whole manor which had bright ribbons and flowers decorating the candle base and a mountain of presents were stacked below the tree.

They had ginger cookies and mince pie, roast turkey and Christmas pudding. From the large cut glass bowl there was the sweet smell of stewed fruits punch. What surrounded all of that was the smiles from his family and friendly acquaintances. Even his father, who was usually stern and serious seemed like he was smiling.

The band to perform the music and a stage with the puppet play and all the festive and merry things could all be prepared by the present Edgar now.

However the people from his memories no longer existed. The only person who remembered that sight was Edgar.

"Last year's Christmas was horrible, wasn't it?"

".....Yes."

Edgar was captured in a prison cell and waiting for his execution and Raven was trying all he could to rescue Edgar.

Out of all his comrade friends, the only ones who survived were Raven and Ermine.

"When you think of it that way it's really quite unbelievable. I can't believe this is reality."

He felt that way probably because Lydia wasn't by his side.

Because Lydia, who had offered her hand in helping Edgar become earl, wasn't here he was felt like his position was an illusion.

"The girl named Lydia, I wonder if she really exists. I worried if the time I spent with her was all my imagination."

"It is reality, Lord Edgar."

Being told that flat-out by Raven he felt relieved. However Edgar was thinking about the possibility that Lydia would not return at this rate.

If she were in Scotland, she wouldn't be involved in the troubles Edgar would bring with him. She wouldn't have to be put through the danger that would arise if she participated in the battle between Edgar and his nemesis.

He just had to remove her from the position as the private fairy doctor of the Ashenbert family. Lydia probably wouldn't even complain and accept it even if it was an unreasonable discharge.

From the beginning it was like she was forced into being hired against her will. Edgar kept thinking that he needed to make a commitment, to solidify his resolve.

"Raven, don't you think that the young miss Emily of the Bostner family we are going to visit has feelings for me?"

He tried to change the subject, but that didn't mean he stopped thinking about Lydia.

"I would not know."

"Don't you think she smiles so cute?"

Raven looked back without any expression on his face at Edgar, but it seemed like he was slightly confused. Since he was born with extraordinary fighting skills, he was taught to grow up as a killing machine and so found it difficult to

understand his own feelings and how to express them, but when one observes him closely, you could notice the small changes in his expression.

"She's a kind girl. For a daughter of a noble family, she doesn't think high of herself either."

"If Lord Edgar has taken a liking towards her, then it is not my place to speak my thoughts."

"But I can't bring in a woman to the earl family who you don't like."

"Do you mean as a woman you will marry?"

"I'm just saying as an example. But there is nothing bad if you had a good sharp eye in judging a woman. There are endless women and countless times you can meet any one of them. Someday I will surely marry someone so I just might want to ask for your opinion."

And lately, Raven had been showing the pure side of what a young man in his teens would be. It seemed like he had felt offended at careless, frivolous remark.

"Then I recommend Miss Carlton."

He must have really wanted to ask why Edgar wasn't going to see Lydia and bring her back, but since he pledged his loyalty to Edgar he wasn't going to say anything more.

Lydia could see fairies so she could understand the spiritual being that existed within Raven's bloodline.

She was the first person, other than Edgar who Raven accepted and so he must have been thinking it would be tough if Lydia would leave them at this rate.

"If you proposed to her, then Lydia might seriously consider it."

Edgar could only reply foolishly, and the serious Raven seemed like he was offended with that.

"I meant as a lady to serve."

"I know."

Just then, their carriage stopped in front of the Bostner residence.

Raven's expression showed like he was offended, but that was his usual expression as he opened the door allowing Edgar to step out of the carriage.

"Enjoy your stay, my lord."

Raven's eyes didn't meet Edgar's, so that must mean he was still upset.

When one love dies, another love begins.

When the lover's feeling don't connect or the timing is right or their feelings change, there are numerous love relationships that don't work out and it isn't like there is only one woman which exists in the world.

If there was an attractive woman and if he could spend a good time with her, then he could let time go by without Lydia being here. Over time, he might be able to think of Lydia as a friend.

If that become true, then it was for the best for Lydia.

That's why Edgar was trying to enjoy attending this tea party.

The guests enjoyed the sweet aroma of the expensive tea as they conversed as they listened to the pianist's performance and shared each other's opinions on the poet's new piece of work he wrote for Christmas.

In the lively circle of conversation, the woman who was the cousin of Emily was quite the intellect so they could discuss the same topic which grew into a heated debate.

As time went by, Emily appeared out of the blue like she was trying to interrupt their talk and spoke to Edgar.

"Lord Ashenbert, we are having a cracker game over there. Would you like to join?"

Edgar could easily tell that she had thought this over and was using all of her courage in coming over and asking so he couldn't help but smile.

Honestly, he liked the sight of a woman trying her best to win his attention. There wouldn't be a man on this earth who would dislike that sort of thing, but surely there were only a limited number of men who was granted such an opportunity.

Then it should be all right to enjoy that opportunity to its fullest extent.

"Emily, are you still doing such a childish game? It isn't something you would invite the earl to."

At her cousin's remark, she grew red as an apple while she puffed her cheeks.

"But there isn't enough people."

"I don't mind, my lady. If it's Christmas, then one should play a cracker game

once."

She smiled in relief and she walked along Edgar.

In the next room, there was a gathering of men and women and they arrived when the Christmas crackers which were wrapped in bright, colorful wrappings were being passed out.

One person on each side of the cracker took the cracker ends by hand and they all yelled Merry Christmas as they let the crackers go off.

What came out of the ripped wrappings were bonbon candies.

The man and woman who got the same colored candy became pairs and went to hide it somewhere in the room. When everyone hid theirs, they all started on the candy search at once and the last pair who couldn't find theirs became the winners. It was that kind of silly game.

"Looks like Emily got cheery red. So the gentleman who got the same color is....."

Edgar didn't take any time and walked right up to Emily and smiled to her.

"Hello again, Emily."

She made a gasp with an excited "Oh my," and she looked especially happy.

Edgar slid his glance to see a different man watching them with a look like he wanted to say something.

He must have been the real one who got cherry red. However when Edgar silently stared at him for a while, the man finally remained silent till the end.

It seemed like his message of lending him the role of Emily's pair had gotten through. There wouldn't be anyone who would deliberately come out with the truth and make a happy and excited young woman show a disappointed reaction.

The young girls didn't seem to know but this method was often used by the men in the cracker game.

"If the pairs are decided then let's begin in turn. The hiding place is drawing room at the end of the hall, as long as you hide in there it will be fine."

Edgar took Emily's hand with his and went out into the hallway. When it was just the two of them, he immediately whispered to her in a low voice.

"I am very lucky. I was praying that I would wind the same candy as you."

"Me too....., that's why I was very surprised. Because I am always so unlucky."

"Oh, I'm curious to know who you always pray to become pairs with."

"What, ah,well, it's many years ago. It was just a little childhood adoration kind of thing...."

"Then you still haven't experienced your first love?"

"Well....."

She gazed at him with soft fawning eyes.

"You'll find your first love from now?"

"Maybe so," she replied.

When they left the crowd and it was just the two of them, she suddenly stopped hiding her affection. This to Edgar was saying he could just do as he pleased with her.

To begin with this game was favored because a man and woman were allowed to spend time alone together by using the excuse of hiding the candy.

The door of the drawing room that they reached was also decorated with mistletoe just like all the other rooms.

When they stepped into the room, Edgar spoke.

"Did you know? You aren't supposed to refuse a kiss when you're under a holly tree."

".....Yes, but it's still daylight."

As she smiled joyfully, she also stopped when Edgar stopped his pace.

They silently gazed at each other. When he placed his hand on her cheek, she closed her eyes.

He thought how simply easy this was.

No, this was how it normally should be. Lydia was just so difficult.

As he thought that, he suddenly couldn't stop thinking about Lydia.

Who could it be that might meet Lydia under a holly mistletoe tonight. It was surely not him who was in London so far away.

But he remembered her saying that she didn't have any close friends back in her hometown. Since it was a Christmas with just the fairies and her father Prof. Carlton, there shouldn't be anything happening where her lips will be stolen by any man.

However, there was no guarantee that there wasn't a man who shared the same small foolish feeling that Edgar was feeling towards the young girl in front of him towards Lydia.

"Where shall we hide the candy?"

As he put on a foolish act and whispered so into her ear, Emily opened her eyes and for a moment looked confused but immediately understood him and smiled.

"You are too unkind, my lord. Playing with me like that."

"I thought it was improper to do wrong on holly Christmas."

She accepted his words and looked like she believed him to be a true gentleman.

Even if he were to hold back now, where was the meaning in that. That wouldn't mean that the person beside Lydia would also relinquish their role like he did.

However, no matter how ridiculous he thought it was, Edgar was no longer able to enjoy an artificial romance game any longer.

He was made of lies.

The title of Earl Ashenbert and his background, history and his gentleman-like display was all a lie. This girl who believe all of that was true didn't realize that he flirted with her was a lie.

If she found out about the true Edgar, then she was sure to go running in terror. It was no easy feat for anybody to accept Edgar's pain and suffering and what burden he carried with him.

Lydia was the only one who didn't run when she found of his truth and touch and connect with his pain. Even if she knew she was being deceived, that sweet pure girl used all her power to try and save a hopeless man in despair.

The only one he wanted by his side was Lydia. Because she knew the real Edgar, the Edgar made of lies, Lydia was the only one who wouldn't believe his marriage proposal.

<Scotland, Christmas tree>

The man named Guy Nash apparently attended the same boarding school and was the roommate of Andy.

He didn't return to see his family during this Christmas holiday and Lydia wasn't in any position to know what his reasons were in visiting his friend's house, but she was told by her father on their way home that his family relationship was very complicated.

Even so, what was the meaning of calling someone stupid?

Lydia couldn't let go of her dragging bad temper as she held the wrapped goose meat in hand walking to the riverside a distance away from the town.

As Lydia came near the water, the water surface moved and rippled and a black horse appeared from the river.

"Hey, looks like it's been a bad day for you."

The kelpie murmured in an irritated tone as he stuck out his head out of the water surface.

"It's Christmas. To us humans, this is a wonderful day."

"To me it's horrible. The sound of the bell is so annoying and if I even try to get near the town, there are those holly trees or mistletoes or disgusting charms that get in my way."

To kelpie, who was an unseelie court fairy, everything that was going on during Christmas.

"But I brought a Christmas present for you."

Lydia held out the wrapped goose meat.

Kelpie transformed into his human form and walked up to the riverside where Lydia was standing and carelessly took it.

"Hey it's dead. I'd rather eat it when it was alive."

"Don't complain."

"Well, I'll still take it. See you."

Surprisingly, he took it without a fight and returned back into the river. It looked like Kelpie really didn't like the Christmas air.

Darn, I thought I could have a chat with him just for a bit.

Feeling slightly disappointed, Lydia turned around to walk back on the trail by herself.

Christmas is a wonderful day. But every year, since the fairies would go into hiding, Lydia would feel a little lonely.

Even the seelie court fairies didn't come out of their hiding places that much. In the end, Lydia wasn't able to get refreshed by a change of pace and so returned to her family home.

When she walked through the kitchen from the back door, she smelled someone baking a pie. For the Carlton family Christmas dinner, their female chef was working so busily.

There was white steam rising up out of the large pot with warm pudding in it which filled the kitchen in a white fog.

Since the Carlton family house usually was empty, the housekeeper and chef who they hired to come and work for a few days were preparing the Christmas feast for their own families as well. Because of that, there was an unbelievable amount of dishes and drinks that a father and daughter could not possibly eat. It was like they were preparing for a grand party.

It was a peculiar thing, but the smell of delicious food had the effect of calming one's emotions and so simply, Lydia was starting to feel better.

"Lydia, is that you?"

She heard her father's voice and so she headed towards the drawing room.

"Yes, Father, I'm back....."

However she stopped in her tracks without thinking at the doorway because she saw a man who was not her father, a young man in the room.

It was Guy.

The root of Lydia's bad feeling turned to face her and innocently said "Welcome home."

"You, you! What are you doing here?"

"He was kind enough to carry in our Christmas tree."

In the direction her father pointed there was a fir tree that stood so tall it was nearly touching the ceiling standing in the middle of the room.

"Since there is only a young daughter in the Carlton family, I heard that you wouldn't have prepared a tree that requires quite a lot of strength to carry. That's why I brought an extra one from a clergy house."

Indeed it had been a long time since her family had prepared a Christmas tree. It was impossible for Lydia alone to bring one and her father had just returned

from his job in London two days ago.

"If you don't hurry up Christmas is going to be over. You should help out with putting on the ornaments."

I understand now what his business is here, but help out? Who does he think he is?

"I wonder how many years it has been since there was a tree in our house. Lydia, don't you think this Christmas is going to be a festive one? You should thank this young man."

Even if she was told so by her optimistic father, Lydia was still vexed.

"Oh, thanks is not necessary."

"The tree ornaments, those should be stored in the back shed. Let's go and search for them. Lydia, could you make some tea for Mr. Nash."

Most likely, her father must think that there weren't any men in this town who would deliberately get close to Lydia with any ulterior motives. It was true that all her life, there wasn't anyone who approached Lydia who was rumored to be the town oddball.

That's why his attitude seemed to be saying that Lydia, who didn't have any close human friends, should get along with Guy.

When her father didn't waste any time to walk out of the room, Guy smiled at Lydia who remained standing in the room frowning as if he was trying to soothe her temper.

"I'm sorry about what I said earlier. I didn't mean to say anything bad about you. In other words, this is my gesture of apology."

"Thank you very much for the tree. But we can't have Pastor Millar and his family's important guest waste his precious time helping us out. I will do the rest, thank you, by myself."

"Oh, so you are upset? But you know, the one who said all that was Andy, and it wasn't me right? I didn't know what kind of girl you were so I was just responded to make conversation."

That might be true.

"You know I always thought that Andy fellow didn't have a good eye in women, but now I know that he didn't have good taste ever since he was a boy. He had

such a cute neighbor like you but he was so stupid in not getting along with you."

This man is sure full of himself isn't he?

He reminds me of someone, thought Lydia.

"You're not going to follow your friend's advice? I might be a crazy girl who is out of my mind."

"Then explain to me how you are out of your mind. I am interested."

"I have no responsibility to satisfy your curiosity. I am not a giraffe or elephant."

"That wasn't my intension...., well, gosh."

He looked like he was troubled. That part of him was a little bit more cuter than a certain someone who would talk someone into something and left no room for mistakes.

"It's just that, well, I wanted to make sure what kind of girl you were with my own eyes."

"I'm just as Andy described me as."

"That you can see fairies? I just think you have a very good imagination."

It isn't imagination.

"Oh, don't step there."

He stopped his tracks in surprise when he tried to approach her.

"There is a hole there that fairies come in and out of."

".....Uh-huh."

As she thought, he didn't know how to react. No matter what they say at first, it was rare for someone to be able to accept Lydia.

That wasn't his fault so Lydia went ahead and offered him a seat because she started to feel guilty about continuing to be in a bad mood.

"This town is quite a peaceful, calming place," noted Guy like he needed to collect himself.

"Are you going to go to the party of the landlord?" asked Guy.

"I'm not going."

"Why?"

"I don't like parties."

As Lydia said that, she recalled all the countless parties that she was taken to in

London by Edgar.

In most cases, Edgar was able to make Lydia have a delightful time.

In the upper class, there are still some that condemn the idea of bringing along a middle class girl, but the atmosphere that Edgar created around himself influenced others so that they viewed Lydia favorably.

But when she returned to this town, Lydia was like Cinderella whose magical spell died. Parties and Lydia didn't match.

"Because you are seen as an oddball? Then let's go together. I'm an outsider and I was thinking that going to a party where everyone but me knew each other was bothersome. Let me escort you."

"You'll be considered an oddball yourself."

"So as long as I'm okay with that you're agreeing to go?"

Lydia was taken-aback.

She never imagined she would be invited to go to a party from a man other than Edgar.

"Let's go together."

I wonder what Edgar would do if he found out about this. For her to think of such a thing, she must really be out of her mind.

But what should I do, thought Lydia over and over in her head.

"Guy! You're taking so much time, I came to get you!"

Just then, there was a bright, energetic voice that spoke out, and Lydia came back to her senses.

The one who came running into the room was Andy's younger sister who was one year younger than Lydia.

"You said that you were going to deliver the tree and yet why are you taking so much time talking?"

"Oh sorry about that, I was the one keeping him in here,"
said Lydia's father to walked in right after the girl.

"Oh Mr. Carlton, you really shouldn't have that. I have to finish a chess match with Guy before we have lunch."

"Oh dang. I tried to escape because I knew I was losing."

The girl pulled Guy's arm as he was scratching his head to hurry him to leave.

And then she glanced at Lydia with very challenging eyes.

Well, he already has a girl he is going to escort, thought Lydia.

It was silly of her to think about his offer for even a second.

Lydia stood up to encourage Guy's leave.

"Good-bye, Mr. Nash. Have a nice Christmas."

He opened his mouth, as if he wanted to say something, but before he could, Lydia turned her back to him.

After Guy has hurried along by the young girl pulling his arm and left, her father spoke to her in a humored voice.

"A good-looking man sure do have a busy schedule."

"Good-looking? I don't think so."

"Lydia, you must not compare him with Lord Ashenbert."

"What, no, I'm not comparing at all!"

She denied in a hurry, but if one would look at Edgar on a daily-basis, then it might be difficult to easily accept other men as handsome.

But even if that someone to be as handsome as Edgar, to be that flirtatious would be out of the question.

Lydia repeated that thought to herself in her head numerously.

Ever since she got her holiday time off work, she had been thinking that over to herself over and over.

Since she didn't want to admit that she had feelings for him, and so she could tightly seal away the faint feeling that was growing in her wanting to believe in him.

"More importantly, Father, what about the Christmas tree decorations?"

"Oh, this is it. How they bring back the old memories. Lydia, do you remember?"

Lydia softly opened up the box that her father set down onto the table.

There were several knitted decorations that were made of white lace. They were knitted into snow flakes, stars and mistletoe and other kinds of shapes and designs.

"I remember. These were made by Mother, weren't they."

She recalled how the whiteness of the fragile lace would decorate the

evergreen tree's dark green color like softly falling snow. Although it wasn't a bright or lavish decoration, she could feel the warm love in them.

As a finishing touch, the tree was magically lit up by bright candles and shined beautifully. Lydia recalled how she sat on her mother's lap and gazed at its beauty.

Thanks to the tree that Guy brought, this Christmas was going to be a good one. When tomorrow came, she thought she would be able to say thank you honestly.

"I'm sorry about how my rude sister acted."

That was what Andy, the pastor's son said a little while after Guy had left.

"Oh, no no, we're sorry for keeping him here for such a long time."

As Lydia listened to her father's denying reply, she was about to bury the Christmas presents for the fairies beneath the window.

From the front door, no one would be able to spot Lydia who was blocked by the fence and squatting down outside under the windowsill. She could hear the digressive conversation going on between her father and Andy but Lydia silently dug a hole with a hand-shovel in the soft ground between the shrubs.

She placed some silver coins and walnuts down in the hole.

In the Christmas traditions, there were a number of charms to repel evil that fairies hated, but this act was done to prove that this event was a human tradition and did not mean any harm.

"Hey Lydia, don't you smell something good?"

Lydia did not notice that there was a long gray-haired cat standing beside her on his hind-feet. She didn't see him since morning, but when it came time for dinner he would always show up.

"Welcome home, Nico. The turkey is almost done baking."

"I can't wait for the mince pie. Is it all right if I have as much as I like?"

"Of course."

Even though Nico was a fairy, because he loved to eat, he loved Christmas since there was so much to eat on this special day.



He was the only fairy who would participate in the human's Christmas celebration.

Thanks to Nico who was like that, the Christmas which was originally going to be celebrated by father and daughter would usually become quite festive and loud but when a cat who would use a knife and fork at the dinner table would participate, it was natural that they weren't able to invite other people.

Of course, Lydia wasn't the kind of person who want to invite other people to her Christmas which her father was normally absent, and her father wasn't the type of person to come up with the idea of inviting since he enjoying a quiet meal.

"Oh yeah, that pastor son, he sure is strange,"

said Nico, as he perked his ear to listen to the talking voices coming from the front door.

"What do you mean strange?"

"He told that younger sister of his that a fellow named Guy is most likely at the Carlton's house trying to flirt the daughter of that family. He even advised her that she should go bring him back as soon as she could."

"Nico, you were listening to their conversation?"

He crossed his arms in front of his chest and waved his gray tail from side to side as if to say it was involuntary.

"I had no intention of it turning out like that, but humans who can't see us fairies don't even pay attention to the fact that we are right there and go on starting a conversation as they like so I can't help it."

That was true.

"The reason why Guy shows any interest in me is just curiosity. So Andy must have wanted Guy to not come to our house so often for his and his younger sister's sake."

"They why would he bother and come all this way to say sorry about the trouble?"

"Maybe he was just taking Father in regard."

And so, from a young age he would tactfully be able to make the adults think of him as "a perfect child."

"That's what I don't understand. In the end, he just personally feels nervous about you right. And yet, he's more troublesome and worse than the humans who say bad things to your face because he would do those kind of things when there were teachers or adults around. And yet when it was just you kids, he would go around the adult's back and call you an oddball and strange."

Because Nico would hear those things and let her know about it, Lydia had never felt comfortable about Andy since long ago.

Or else, she would have thought he was just someone who didn't like her or hate her, but was just someone indifferent about her situation or character.

However, it wasn't like she couldn't understand why Andy would feel uncomfortable about her.

Because their first encounter was horrible.

From a young age, he was the type of boy who feared to a point of fixation

about the sin of corrupting to the temptations of the devil, more because of his own personality more than the fact that he was born as a pastor's son.

During a certain occasion, his parents had nearly found out he had done a childish prank, and he was fighting against the temptation that he didn't want to be scolded and the feelings of guilt about telling a lie.

Andy was thinking about what he should do as he entered the grassy fields that spread out outside his family's yard and approached the stone ruins. However Lydia was there and apparantly she had tried to place a curse on the young boy who had played a prank with a horribly terrifying face.

From Lydia's point of view, she was just playing with some fairies and Andy suddenly walked in on them. The fairies who were dancing in a circle were suddenly interrupted with a boy stomping in and ruining their circle had turned on him by started to climb and pinch all over his body and so she just tried to scare them away.

Since Andy was just a child, he had felt the pain from being pinched by the fairies and on top of that he was able to see the brownish shadows that were jumping around Lydia.

He believed that Lydia was a witch and become horrified and cried for the Lord's mercy and scurried back home.

Lydia had no idea until what age he continued to believe that she was a witch, but as a boy who was calm and good-mannered in front of adults, he couldn't accept the fact that he was scared by a girl the same age as him and went running home and so he must have thought it better if she was a witch.

At the same time, by thinking that Lydia was a crazy, strange child, he must have come to the conclusion that there was no magical powers to be scared of. That must have been why he went around spreading the rumor about how crazy Lydia was to his friends and didn't want them to come in contact with Lydia.

And apparently it was Andy who was the one to make one of his friends write a love letter as a prank to Lydia.

"Well, he just hates me, so there's nothing I can do about it."

Lydia stood up.

The voices who were talking by the front door had stopped, and since she heard the sound of the door closing, she thought that Andy must have gone home.

"Is that some sort of charm spell?"

However, he was right there. From the other side of the garden plants, he was peering down at the ground that Lydia had covered back over with dirt with suspicious eyes.

".....Yes, that's right."

He was looking down at the ground with such a deep frown that one would have thought he was going to make a sign of a cross with his hands on his chest any moment.

"Weren't you talking to someone?"

"Yes, with a fairy. Do you have a problem with that?"

Nico was already done on all four feet and pretended to be a cat and scurried off and so Lydia came up with the best response she could.

Andy glared at her with a look of scorn and pity at her.

"Fairies, huh. I see you haven't grown up at all."

"I see you also haven't changed from how you talk bad about others."

He must have become disgruntled since he went silent.

"You shouldn't believe what Guy had said. That fellow says what is convenient for him and is like that to everyone."

"Why don't you say that to your sister and not me?"

".....Well, that's true but you look like you aren't used to being told stuff like that."

What? Because I don't look like the type of girl who is used to being approached by men? Does he mean that I would jump to believe that what he said was true?

Instead of losing her temper, Lydia stared at him because she was dumbfounded.

Why must I be told this by him?

Even though that might be true.

She was twisted around Edgar's finger because she wasn't accustomed to a man's approach.

But she didn't have to be told to not take what he said seriously.

She knew that and yet she was nearly on the verge on believing him and becoming scared of that, Lydia asked for a holiday vacation and escaped to Scotland.

He would take Lydia's hand like it was natural, kissed the locks of her hair and speak sweet words to her. He gazed at her with such soft, warm eyes and smiled gently to her and would take any opportunity when she lowered her guard to embrace her closely.

When she was approached with that much persistently, then she couldn't blame herself to think he might serious, but if she just exchanged a few routine remarks with someone, she wouldn't become conceited and pretentious.

There weren't that many men around who would be convincing enough that she would like to believe in him for even a second.

Besides Edgar.....

Unconsciously, Lydia let her eyes fall down to the moonstone ring.

It was a ring that Edgar put on her finger. And now it became an engagement ring that only he could remove.

Its glistening brightness always reminded her and did not allow Lydia to erase Edgar's presence from her daily life even though they were far apart.

"You have nothing to worry about. I have someone I am seeing."

Andy opened his eyes wide with his mouth falling open.

She wondered why he would be so surprised like that, but Lydia gradually came to realize what she had just said and turned into a panicked state as she felt herself turning bright red.

"Um, uhh, when I said seeing I meant, we still aren't, I was just asked..."

"Is that true?"

On the contrary to Lydia's flustered reaction, Andy was able to regain his calm. He looked like he was suspicious of her. Like she was just coming up with lies.

"What? Yes, it's true. Um,he's a villain I met in London....., no I mean, anyway it's true!"

From bad to worse, he looked like he became even more suspicious.

"Are you just being pompous?"

Oh, this man is really annoying.

“It’s not a lie!”

Lydia couldn't stop herself from becoming adamant. Putting aside what Edgar was really trying to do, it was true that he proposed to her.

“Hmm, well good for you then. I should go inform Guy.”

Andy left after ending their conversation with a tone that he didn't believe her the least bit.

Lydia was left with an embarrassing feeling lingering in her chest.

It may not be a lie, but it sure did seem like she was just trying to make herself look impressive.

Edgar was not Lydia’s lover. His sweet talk and marriage proposal might have been done so he could forget about his one true love.

Even though she was well aware of that, she couldn't believe why she had said such a thing.

(3) What to wish from the heart

<London, Christmas dinner>

“My lord, your guests have arrived,” announced the butler who appeared at his office at 2pm.

Edgar didn’t like how the letter he was writing was coming out and he rolled it up into a ball and lifted his head up.

“The dinner preparations are complete. We can begin anytime you wish.”

“Tomkins. From an objective point of view, don’t you think that Lydia is an attractive woman?”

The butler was completely used to his master suddenly bringing up the topic about a woman out of the blue and so he didn’t show any signs of surprise. He straightened himself by stretching his round body as tall as he could and spoke.

“Yes, I do agree.”

“Lydia thinks that she doesn’t suit any man’s interest, but I think that there is no such thing.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Even if she says she was called an oddball in her hometown, there might be a

man or two who might secretly have feelings for her.”

“If there were, it would not be a surprise.”

“Which means, the reason why she hadn’t been romantically involved with anyone or asked to be was because there could be a man who was interfering with that.”

“Like my lord?”

“Me? When?”

“You had accidentally lost the Christmas card you were handed by that gentleman at that near-by park who was an acquaintance with Ms. Carlton.”

“Ohh, that was just a bad wind that blew the letter out of my hand and made it fall into a puddle, so it wasn’t like I lost it. Although his writing has surely faded.”

“.....I see.”

“Anyway Tomkins, that shameless man who is in Scotland might fall in love with Lydia who returned home after a long while all over again and might want to suddenly tell her his feelings. That might just happen.”

Edgar had been thinking if he could find out by writing to her if she had been approached by any man, or invited to stand underneath a mistletoe but he couldn’t stop from writing like he was full of jealousy or possessive over her and so he gave up.

Even if he discussed this with Tomkins there was no answer to his problem, but he didn’t want to bottle up all those negative thoughts he couldn’t stop thinking about.

“Then what kind of reply would Lydia said. If she decides to court that man, then I would completely be heart-broken. On top of that, I might be abandoned by Raven.”

“Raven, sir? Why would he turn his back on you, my lord?”

“He said that he wants to serve Lydia.”

“I would agree with him completely.”

“I know, could you and Raven go and talk to Lydia. So that she would marry me.”

“My lord, my family the Tomkins have served this earl family for generations

and have loyally protected one rule of our house. It is we must not refuse the order of the earl. If I am given an order that is impossible, then I must ask you to allow me to quit.”

Tomkins said that to him in such a serious tone no one could laugh. In other words, convincing Lydia was impossible to accomplish.

“.....I’m kidding, Tomkins.”

Edgar was only left to take back his suggestion.

“I was aware, my lord.”

His butler who made a devilish smirk seemed to be joking as well.

Edgar combed his fingers through his golden blond hair and slumped down lifelessly back onto the back of his chair.

Suddenly it became so hilarious that he started laughing by himself.

It was useless to think about Lydia who was in far-away Scotland.

Edgar did not have any resolve to put distance between Lydia on his own, but if he were to be heart-crushingly rejected, then that might be a chance to give up and move on from Lydia.

If it were something that was going to happen in an undeniably far location, there was no way he could do any futile resistance or interfere.

“Let’s start the Christmas party.”

Edgar stood up.

In the beginning, he didn’t have any idea if he had the resolve to keep Lydia by his side or instead, he was all right if Lydia would feel disgusted and walk out on him.

The Christmas dinner was going to start from lunch.

And today the guests who had gathered at the Ashenbert house were bachelors who had nothing to do on Christmas.

Those who didn’t have family, or those who were estranged with their family members, or those who were lonely nobles from overseas. So it was those rogue outsiders who Edgar had been well-acquainted with on a regular basis from the ton that had gathered for today’s gathering.

Even Paul, who was Edgar’s friend and a painter and not from the upper-class, was also participating.

Since it was just a gathering of well-acquainted friends, once the eating started, it started to feel like a home-party more than a formal dinner.

By the time they put the knife in the turkey, there were quite of number of wines that had been opened, and when the meat juices along with the nuts and dry fruits that were boiled together started to pour out, the adults started to holler out in loud voices like giddy children.

Their discussion about what was best, gravy sauce or cranberry sauce for the roast turkey never ceased.

The Christmas dishes that were by the recipe book brought out his childhood memories.

He believed that the Christmas table that was the same every year would always continue.

“Hey, Edgar, let’s do a party at my place next year.”

“No, Lord Ashenbert, my cook is quite impressive, if I say so myself.”

“You two, are you planning to be bachelors next year as well?”

“Of course. If you were to make the mistake of getting married, we would never be able to attend such a swinging party. I would never want to be cowering in the corner at my wife’s family house.”

“Then you just need to marry a woman who has no family,” said a female guest.

“So someone like you?”

“Oh my lady, if you wanted to marry me you just had to say so.”

“I was suggesting to Lord Ashenbert,” she replied.

“Oh my, looks like you have been rejected. What will you do, earl?”

“It sounds like a good idea, but your son is making a forbidding look.”

“Son? Well, I don’t have any memory of giving birth to one, besides he is 6 years older than me.”

“Your son-in-law, Mother.”

When everyone burst out laughing, Paul, who was sitting next to Edgar, was the only one with a puzzled look on his face.

Edgar whispered into his ear that those two are lovers, but he must have been drunk and couldn’t think straight as he smiled while saying “Oh marvelous.”

There was plenty of liquor poured onto the special Christmas pudding and lit

with a candle fire.

When there were small blue fires placed on the table and filling the room with a sweet smell, the party became even more lively and mirthful.

In the middle of all that bustling and boisterousness, Edgar decided to have the serving waiters go stop working early.

Christmas was a day that was special for everyone. There was sure to be a party for just the servants only in the corner of the house from now.

“By the way Edgar, I heard that there were a number of families that wanted to invite you to their party, but why did you refuse all of them?”

By the time they switched from the dining room to the salon, everyone was already acting relaxed like they were in their own home and were indulging a cigar to their liking.

The vast plates of dishes and sweets that couldn't possibly be eaten were probably going to be completely consumed as everyone was going to enjoy drinking throughout the night.

“They are all families who have young marriageable daughters. It would be unfair of me to just choose one, right?”

“I see, if it were a bachelor earl who had no family, then there was plenty of reason to want to become family with you. “

“So, earl. Who is your main target? We are all placing a bet. On who was the girl who made you serious about her to make you break up with all of your playmates and clean your act.”

“Hmm, so who are you betting on?”

“Now we can't say that in front of you. Oh, I know, Paul, let's have you join the bet as well.”

“What, oh no, I'm fine....”

“Why is that? You can join with just one pound. We already have more than 20 people betting. Wouldn't this be a little earning opportunity for you?”

Paul already knew who Edgar's target was and that his relationship with her was encountering a dangerous point. He couldn't be blamed if he didn't want to waste his money on a useless bet.

“Then let me bet on Paul's behalf. On Miss Lydia Carlton.”

Edgar tossed a one pound silver coin onto the table.

“Who is that?”

“Hey, is there anyone who bet on that girl?”

“No, no one.”

“Edgar, is she your main interest?”

“Wait, everyone. This is Earl Ashenbert we are talking about, he’s surely planning to have some fun by twisting around our bet. You always leave us in the dark.”

Edgar made a sour smile and stood up.

“Then let me excuse myself. I’m going to drop by the servant’s party,”

he said as he left the room thinking in a sloppy attitude that if he could win that bet, then he wouldn’t mind giving everyone a present of 20 pounds each.

Normally, the simple and plain butler’s private room had become the party location for today.

He started to hear the cook’s violin performance that was slightly off-key. The singing voices and clapping hands and the light dance steps that echoed through was more of an old town and cocky feel.

Ermine noticed he had come and walked over to him. Even she seemed like she was having fun more than usual.

“Lord Edgar, please enjoy watching the dance in this seat.”

“Thank you. By the way, it seems like Raven isn’t here.”

“Yes, he seemed to not be that enthusiastic about a party and so he decided to retreat to his own room.”

Raven would gladly do any kind of job if it was for Edgar, but it seemed like he didn’t think that it was necessary to deepen his relationship with his fellow workers.

“Shall I go call him?”

“No, today, everyone should be where they keep most comfortable.”

“Yes, sir.”

As Edgar gazed at Ermine’s carefree, child-like smile, he thought he never imagined he would be able to spend another Christmas with her like this ever again.

She had given up her own life once before and so she might not be smiling from emotions from the bottom of her heart, but he was fine as long as she never had to go through another sad, tormenting experience again.

In order for that to happen, Edgar wanted to do everything he could.

“Ermine, let’s dance.”

He took her hand and walked out into the middle of the dance floor.

When they were in America, the parties they attended with the people from the older, dark province of town were always like this. Even the dance styles that the upper-class would consider improper and vulgar felt endearing to Edgar.

When they smoothly danced the steps in the lower-class dance, there was a cheer that erupted from the servants.

The cook’s violin’s tempo built up more speed. The young maids as well as the experts joined and left the dance circle in turns.

When everyone started dancing, the floor became packed with people that is was a little difficult to move around smoothly, but no one was bothered about that.

No one cared if their steps and turns bumped into other people or they stepped on other people’s feet.

Edgar eventually left that lively area quietly and walked downed the grand staircase of his palace home by himself.

He did all the things for Christmas that he needed to do.

But there was one thing that was missing.

Lydia wasn’t here, by his side.

There was nothing that could be done about that. But as he thought so, he took his coat and opened the front door.

The sky was completely dark now.

The fog that was faintly hanging over the city was extremely cold and immediately cooled down his forehead that was sweating from dancing around so many people.

He pulled up the collar of his coat and quickly walked out into the main street, picked up a carriage and had it head to the Carlton house that was near the

university.

Lydia and Professor Carlton were in Scotland. He was well aware that there was no one there, but he couldn't stop himself from coming.

He got off the carriage at the corner of the block and took a little walk on the street.

There was only one residence that didn't have its window lit up so he was able to tell which house was Lydia's immediately.

Their resident housekeeper must have taken time-off and was visiting her own family.

The window to Lydia's room was black and empty, and when he imagined the possibility that her room won't be occupied and her window lit ever again, he felt a pain in his chest.

He was terrified by the thought that Lydia might leave. But he couldn't go and try to bring her back.

He was more petrified at the thought that she might become unhappy or become a victim because of him than her not being by his side.

But even so, he couldn't throw away his wish to have her in his arms reach.

When he approached the stone-steps in front of the entrance door, the mistletoe wreath that was hanging above the door swayed when a soft, cold breeze blew by.

<Scotland, Christmas wreath>

Even though night had fallen and it was completely dark, the candles that decorated the tree helped brighten the room and the fire in the hearth was burning warmly.

Lydia had spent a lovely dinner with her father and Nico, and was now resting comfortably in her mother's favorite rocking chair as she listened to her father who was reading a book.

Nico had enjoyed a belly-full of the holiday meal and completely drunk was now snoring on the floor by the warm fireplace.

His slobbered mouth was hanging wide open and the rest of his body lay sprawling out over the floor, but this sloppiness was very like Nico, who normally tried to act like a gentleman.

Every so often, his whiskers would twitch. He then would lick his lips. Lydia grew tired and sleepy as she watched Nico's happy-looking face as he seemed to be having a dream where he was eating something.

The cozy, rocking sway of the rocking chair was also relaxing and she recalled that her mother would often take a nap on this same chair in the past.

Lydia was filled with soothing warmth like she was sitting on top of her mother's lap.

When she closed her eyes, her heart returned to when she was a little girl.

When her mother would start to doze off, her father would immediately notice and he would softly cover her with a warm blanket.

Sometimes, her mother would only pretend to fall asleep and waited for her husband to bring a blanket for her.

Her father would then slowly tie-toe out of the room and then her mother would open one of her eyes to have a peek.

"Why?" asked the young Lydia.

"Because I want to make sure that I'm loved more than his rare, precious rocks."

Even if he was a mineralogist who loved to study his study, he wouldn't have covered her with a blanket if he wasn't worried she might catch a cold.

That's what Lydia thought and so she tilted her head to the side in confusion, but her happily smiling mother's only rival was the passion her husband had toward his studies.

"Lydia, is there someone you love?"

Surprised, Lydia looked up at her mother. She was a young child sitting on her mother's lap. And yet her mother was talking to Lydia like she was an adult.

"I wonder what kind of gentleman he is who proposed to you. It's unfortunate that I can't meet him, but if you chose him, then he must be someone who is kind and compassionate like your father."

The hand of Lydia that her mother took into hers was still young and small, but for some reason, had an unfamiliar moonstone ring on one of her fingers.

Even if it couldn't be seen by the human eye due to fairy magic, mother is still able to see it, thought Lydia dimly.

“It’s all right. You just need to be honest with your feelings and believe in him and stay by his side.”

But, Mother, I.....

I’m still a child. I’m too young to be thinking about love and marriage.

I want to stay with father and mother.

“Oh, Lydia, it looks like you have a guest. He must have wanted to see you so badly and came all this way.”

Guided by her mother, the little Lydia slid off the warm, comfortable lap of her mother, and headed toward the front entrance as she was told.

The child Lydia had no idea who ‘he’ was that her mother was talking about. That’s why she could only imagine.

What is his hair color? His eyes? Is he tall? Does he have a lovely smile?

However, by the time she reached the front door, Lydia had changed completely back to her adult form.

As she thought she must be seeing a dream, at the same time, she imagined that her future lover might be standing on the other side of this door.

The blond-haired, ash-mauve eyed face of Edgar emerged in Lydia’s mind.

But what if it’s not him?

It was more likely that it wasn’t him, but Lydia was not able to think of another man than him.

The door gently opened before Lydia touched it with her hand.

Lydia held her breath and gazed out to the other side, however there was no one in sight.

There was no one standing on the other side of the door.

I guess that means I will be living by myself.

As she felt disappointed, she stepped out into the dark outdoors. Snowflakes started to fall down around her as it was brought by the winter winds.

For some strange reason, the moonstone ring was glowing.

Lydia raised her head up and spotted a shadowy figure by the front gate lighted up by a lantern and hurried her way there.

The figure was leaning up against the brick wall gatepost and sitting down on the ground with his eyes closed. More than the light of the lantern, his

glimmering bright golden hair enhanced the glow of his perfectly sculptured face.

It was him, no matter where he went, whatever he did, he was always able to carry himself gracefully and elegantly.

“Edgar! What happened? Wake up!”

When she shook him, it seemed like he was dozing off in a nap as his eyes snapped open in surprise.

“Lydia? Why on earth are you here? Did you return to London?”

“What, this is Scotland.”

“No, this is London, in front of your family’s house.”

Since he said it in such a plain, matter of fact tone, Lydia felt dubious even as she looked around to check, but she saw stone-built houses lined up tightly next to each other along a town street.

The place Lydia was, indeed, a few footsteps in front of her family’s London residence.

“This can’t be, I had just walked through our front yard to go to our front gate.... Edgar, come this way.”

Edgar stood up and took a step towards the direction Lydia guided him and widened his eyes.

“This is....Scotland?”

“We’re in my family’s front yard.”

“Then, that means, the house over there is the one you grew up in?”

Although it was an ordinary two-story house, there was a warm, welcoming light basking out from its windows. Edgar gazed towards it with a look like he was in deep thought.

“I wonder if this is a dream,” he murmured.

“Yes, it’s a dream. A dream I’m having.”

Because she thought for a second that she wanted to meet Edgar, she must have ended up seeing this kind of dream.

“No, you’re wrong, it’s my dream. When I sat down in front of your house, I felt asleep.”

His ash-mauve eyes reflected the golden light from the lantern and seemed to

burn with heat even more than usual. But this might be what Lydia was imagining Edgar would be like in her head.

Even as she thought that, she couldn't stop herself from asking.

"Why were you in front of my house...."

"I was lonely. I wanted to see you, so badly."

More than Lydia imagined, his reply was sweet and filled with longing. It was like he was the real Edgar.

Lydia felt her face's temperature grow hot and averted her eyes and drew her body back into the shadow of the bushes like she was trying to escape the light of the lantern.

However, when she did that, it only looked like they were a pair of timid lovers embarrassed about being alone together and tried to withdraw from the light.

Edgar suddenly lost the distance between together and they became so close that their shoulders were nearly touching.

"Everyone is spending tonight with the one they love. The lively parties don't bore me, and my friends are there, but I still became lonely. Because the one I wanted to spend the most time with was....."

"Edgar, if it's true that you were taking a nap outside, then you'll freeze from the cold. You need to wake up and go home."

When she was approached, she couldn't help from feeling nervous and back away.

It was Lydia's usual habit, but Edgar stopped his hand which he was reaching out with because she was behaving so reserved, which perplexed him instead.

"Do you mean I should hurry up and leave?"

"I-I'm just worried."

"You didn't want to see me even in a dream?"

"I didn't say that."

"Then you wanted to see me?"

"....."

"Please tell it to me straight. Since I'm feeling like a coward right now because I haven't seen you for a long time."

There couldn't be a man who didn't match the word coward as him, thought

Lydia, but the Edgar she saw right now didn't show his usual aggressive, persistent stubborn characteristic, and was diligently waiting patiently for Lydia's reply.

".....Yes, I wanted to see you....."

That's why Lydia was also able to be honest with herself.

Since this was surely a dream.

Because it wasn't reality, the emotion she was feeling right now was everything. Even if the Edgar in real life loved someone other than Lydia and even if she was always used for his advantage, that didn't matter right now.

"Good."

Smiling from pure relief, he touched a lock of Lydia's hair and then placed both hands to cradle Lydia's cheeks.

Lydia gazed upwards, and her eyes spotted the mistletoe wreath that hanged down from the arch above the two gate walls beyond the side of his gentle smile.

"Lydia, close your eyes."

When a pair kissed under the Christmas mistletoe, it was said they would stay happily together.

"But, um...."

As she thought, she became embarrassed and couldn't do as he said.

Seeing her reaction, Edgar whispered to her in a soft, velvety voice.

"If this is a dream I'm having, then you wouldn't refuse."

"If it's my dream?"

"Of course, it will happen as you wish."

As she was thinking over what kind of dream she wanted to have, soft lips brushed against her cheek and gradually made way to Lydia's lips.

Perhaps because this a dream, the touch felt so modest and fleeting, and she only had time to feel a moment of warm than a pressing a each other's skin.

But that might be because Lydia still didn't know what a real kiss was.

But the two of them had kissed before, though it was only for a second and very faint, and if she were to recall how close they were to each other at that time, her heart immediately began to race so rapidly that even the slightest hint of a

touch was enough to throw her into a panic.

They only touched each other, so gently like a child, but that might be because this was Lydia's dream and she couldn't imagine any more than this.

But how he didn't let her go was not according to Lydia's wish.

Even the part of how her upper lip was gently suckled just as they finally pulled away from each other was also not a part of what she imagined.

This isn't just my dream?

Is Edgar having the same dream as me?

The moonstone was shining even more brightly than usual through his fingers that were holding her left hand.

"Perhaps this is the magic from this ring? It helped us be together on this holy night."

Could that be so. Maybe it might.

He smiled so much joy as he gazed lovingly at Lydia. Lydia too, felt more peaceful than usual and peered up back at him.

"Oh, I'm in love with you so much."

If that were true, then just for now, she wanted to believe in his words.

And believe that was existed right now was just their pure feelings of thinking about each other.

In reality, it was impossible to try to understand what the other was thinking. It was so difficult to be honest with her feelings, and she didn't have any confidence in herself and terrified of getting hurt.

This was just temporary magic that will disappear when I wake up.

But just for now, I'm going to be in love.



"Lord Edgar."



Hearing Raven's voice, Edgar felt his conscious being woken up from his slumber and opened his eyes.

There was a black-haired young boy of a man who was inspecting him with worry as he lay sitting down on the stone steps of the Carlton family's London home.

"Are you all right, Lord Edgar?"

".....Raven, you came to get me."

Even if he may be wearing a thick overcoat, that couldn't stop him from shivering from the bitter cold and even when he stood up he felt his body whine with a squeak.

When he counted the rings of the church bells, he found out not much time had passed, but the miserable, gloomy feeling that forced him to come here was

gone, and he felt surprisingly relaxed.

“How did you found out I was here.”

“Lord Edgar, I don’t mind who ever she is. I will serve the lady who you have chosen.”

Raven suddenly said that in a terribly formal tone, so he must have pitied Edgar who was left with the only option of coming to Lydia’s empty family house to think about her.

He smiled sourly as he figured out he was sympathized.

Even as he said he loved her, he wasn’t able to go see her or bring her back, and so Raven had been in a bad temper when he saw the cowardly Edgar who tried to distract himself with another woman, but if Lydia were to leave him, then Raven must have decided he would forgive his pathetic master.

“I was having a dream. I have a feeling like Lydia was in it. I might have tried to kiss her.”

“Did she throw her hand at you?”

“I don’t know. I was dreaming just now, but I can’t seem to remember how it was.”

Only he was sure he saw Lydia’s golden, green eyes at a very close distance. He might have been slapped by her, but he had a feeling she didn’t close her eyes that easily for him.

Even in Edgar’s dream, Lydia was like herself.

He thought as he departed from the Carlton residence.

Raven had said he would give up Lydia if she were to leave, but for Edgar to give up on Lydia felt much more difficult than Raven or he himself had ever imagined.

“Oh, but I love a woman who doesn't let her guard down.”



When she inspected the post box, she found that another letter had arrived from Edgar today.

Picking up the letter that was arriving every day since she took time off of work, Lydia thought he sure doesn’t get tired of doing this, but deep down she felt relieved that she hadn’t been forgotten by him.

When she threw her eyes towards the front gate, she spotted the Christmas mistletoe branch that was left hanging on the gate arch even though it was Boxing Day after Christmas.

As Lydia stared at it, her heart suddenly felt in disarray and her heartbeat started beating madly.

The memory of the dream had completely vanished so Lydia had no idea why. But that unknown also brought a peaceful, gentle sensation along with it.

“Hello, Miss Carlton.”

When she turned to face the voice, she saw Guy was waving at her from the other side of the hedges surrounding her house.

“Oh, hello. Thank you for yesterday. Thanks to you we were able to spend a wonderful Christmas.”

When she honestly told him, he looked back at her in a surprised face as he smiled.

“I heard you have a lover?”

The lie she told Andy must have been told to him, she thought as she didn’t give a direct reply back.

“I was told by Andy that he has radiant blond hair and he’s supposedly very good-looking so I don’t have a chance.”

“Oh, I see.....”

“That tree, it was actually something that Andy wanted to bring to your family’s house.”

Lydia had no idea what Guy had suddenly said so she tilted her head to the side in confusion.

“Apparently he cuts down one extra pine tree than the number he was asked to every year. The pastor always asks him why there is one extra left, but Andy must have been worried because he knew the reason why your family wasn’t able to decorate a Christmas tree. But every year, he wasn’t able to deliver it to you.”

“But Andy doesn’t want to deal with me, so he goes around calling me strange and an oddball.....”

“That’s where he’s wrong and he can’t think straight. Since he lost the

opportunity to become friends with you during childhood, maybe he didn't want anybody else to become friendly with you? That's why he was feeling quite annoyed with my attitude deep down. But last night, he said he was going to take a walk by himself and no one could stop him, so I thought that he finally decided to apologize to you, but he must have given up very quickly as he came home right away. And so, he came to give me a warning that the Carlton daughter was unavailable."

"Uh-huh."

The Andy that Lydia pictured always had a look of boredom and looked at her like he saw something evil. But since that was his only reaction towards her, she was able to believe what Guy said about him immediately.

"That twisted personality of his won't be fixed that easily, but it seems like he's decided to fight off people like me for the sake of you and your blond lover from now on, so please forgive him."

That was Guy's last words as he walked off looking satisfied.

"Did I ever tell Andy that Edgar was blond.....?"

As Lydia leaned her head to the side again, she pulled up her shawl to protect herself from the icy, cold winds and turned around to head back into the house. From the trunk of one of the planted evergreen trees, small fairies started to come outside.

They picked up the silver coins and walnuts that Lydia had left in the ground the night before, and they formed a line and headed towards the grassy fields with happy, lively voices.

The laughter of the fairies that sounded similar to the rustle of the tree leaves, eventually mixed with the sound of the wind and gently reached Lydia's back as a rustling sound from the swinging mistletoe wreath.

Credits

Author	Mizue Tani
Illustrator	Asako Takaboshi
Publisher	Shueisha Cobalt Bunko
Translator	Nalya
Book designer	Armaell